

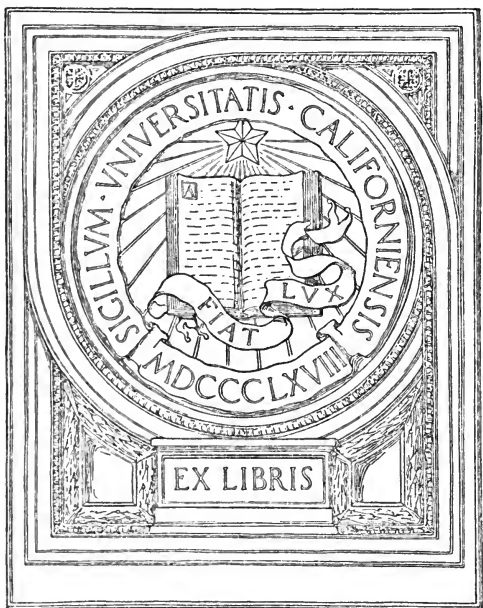
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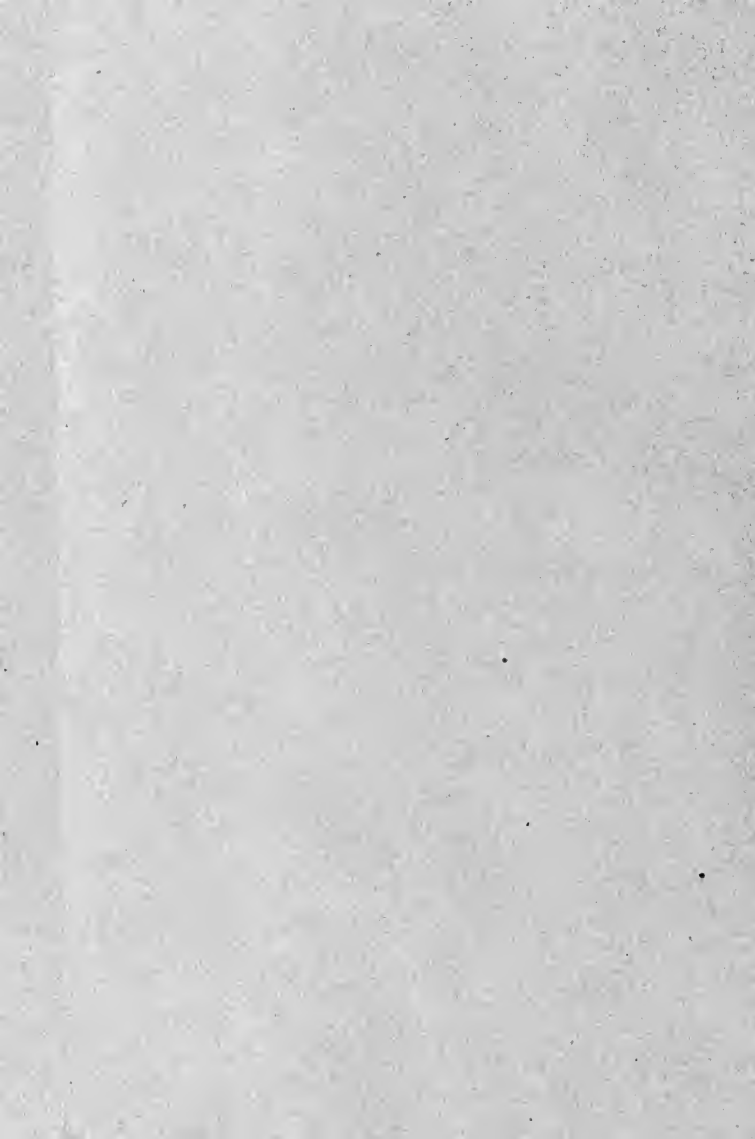
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BY HENRY GRÉVILLE.

AUTHOR OF "SAVÉLI'S EXPIATION," "PHILOMÈNE'S MARRIAGES,"
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M A R K O F.

THE RUSSIAN VIOLINIST.

BY HENRY GREVILLE.

AUTHOR OF

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"DOSIA," "PRETTY LITTLE COUNTESS ZINA," "SONIA,"
"MARRYING OFF A DAUGHTER," "A FRIEND; L'AMI,"
"SAVELI'S EXPIATION," "GABRIELLE," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

MISFORTUNE.

FATHER KOUZMA, seated before his desk of white wood, that had grown yellow with years, and was ornamented with numberless spots of ink of every possible size, was laboriously preparing a sermon for the first Sunday in Lent. At that time, as at present, but not more so than now-a-days, parish priests in Russia were sparing of their sermons. Five or six times a year at most, did they address their flocks: the latter standing up with bowed heads, received this addition to the divine service with about the same resignation with which they would receive a shower on going out

of church. This duty accomplished on both sides, the shepherd and the sheep are wont to separate in a friendly manner, and with a real feeling of relief.

What do dogmas matter to those simple, deeply credulous souls? And on the other hand, what ability, or what knowledge, of the human heart, is necessary in order to be able to find the feeling words that can reach the humble hearts of ones so rude, or that can stir human beings, who are weary of life and worn out with work, and who have become indifferent to almost everything under the yoke of serfdom, and who, moreover, are resigned in advance to all possible calamities?

Father Kouzma was not of those who could find such utterances; his life had been spent, not in struggling against daily troubles, but in enduring them, as one endures illness and death,—sometimes with a dumb discontent, often with a sullen resignation, and sometimes, but rarely, with a sort of inner mockery of spirit. “For all thou hast been so hard,” he was wont to say to Fate; “thou wilt never be so clever as myself, who have found, in spite of promising beginnings, the means wherewith to diminish my chances of happiness and to lead a wretched existence.”

Kouzma Markof had married, like all of his profession, a short time before receiving his last ordination, the ecclesiastical rule requiring that a young man should have laid aside the first cares and the new emotions of marriage before he fully enters upon his priesthood. He had married a sweet young girl, insignificant both in appearance and mind, who possessed

no energy either for good or evil. From this union five children had been born, only three of whom had survived. With the children, their cares and expenses had increased; the *popadia* was not very orderly; little by little, the corners of the furniture were knocked off, the straw bottoms of the chairs gave way, the calico curtains were full of long rents which the weary, worn woman delayed darning. The home became dreary. Father Kouzma from time to time took a little *consolation* in the form of a glass of brandy, and his ideas did not become clearer on account of it. His parishioners, without despising him for a weakness which is nowhere considered a crime, did not evince the same haste as formerly, in bowing to him in the street, or in bringing him their offerings, so that by degrees the cure of Gradovka, which had formerly been considered one of the best in the province, lost its splendor and dwindled into an unimportant position.

Father Kouzma knew this, and it was not without cruel suffering to his pride that he had passed under the Caudine Forks of this forfeiture, and it was because he appreciated his abasement that he had given up struggling with Fate.

"I have no luck," he would say, and it was true. With an active, careful wife, who was full of courage, the cure would have remained as it had been. But with whom could he find fault? The *popadia* was as God had made her; she brought no element of trouble into their existence; being resigned to all calamities, she endured disorder as she did the rain or a fever. She classed everything that annoyed her under one

head: everything was an unpleasantness — “What can I do about it?” she would add; “it is God’s will!”

And, thanks to this fine argument, her children had skirts full of holes, her husband greasy gowns, and herself frocks that were frayed at the bottom and worn out at the top; her servant maid did not obey her, the meals were detestable, and everything went wrong, except the making of the *azyme* bread on Saturday night, which was intended for the next day’s mass, and which was always admirably successful. On this point alone the *popadia* had retained her youthful pride.

Father Kouzma tried to write a sermon from some old homilies which had formerly served his predecessor, who had also been his father-in-law, for he had entered into possession of the cure on account of his marriage with the titular’s daughter.

Such affairs are generally easily arranged, demanding only a superior’s consent, which is very rarely wanting, and only in grave circumstances — when the priest has no sons, or when the sons have chosen another profession, or yet again, when the children, which is not an exceptional case, prefer to seek another nest. No one is a prophet in his own country, and the peasants can remember the youthful pranks of those who become their pastors, and the sons of priests, who are priests themselves, often try to marry girls who are endowed with as fine a cure as possible.

Kouzma had no anxiety in regard to the future of his cure with two sons, one of whom, no doubt, would be touched by grace. Besides, the elder, who had been prepared from his childhood to enter into holy orders,

already took very nicely to Latin. He knew the sacred texts perfectly, and promised to obtain some exceptional reward at the Theological Seminary. He was a thoughtful, serious youth, not without his share of juvenile gayety, of course, but his reasonable mind promised to save him from many of the mortifications his father had known.

"If he only finds a good wife!" sighed his father, as he thought of his own, who was good assuredly, but so incapable of helping him. The old homilies did not inspire this pastor of a flock who was but little appreciative of sacred eloquence, and he closed the copy book yellow with age, held his head in his hands, and began to dig into his poor weary brain.

The August wind beat against the window panes, with a little fine, fierce rain, that ceased from time to time, to begin again stronger; the dull, gray day gave no indication of the hour it might be, though the sun was still high in the horizon; but so many clouds hid the poor sun that it would take at least four or five days before it could pierce through them. Autumn was approaching; the yellow-grown leaves that fell from the birch-trees, and that were driven against and fastened to the window-panes by the strength of the rain, spoke of shortened days, of long, sad evenings, of muddy, impassable roads, of the three months of transition, which are so hard to endure, before the beautiful clear nights, and the hard carpet of pure snow of the still distant winter should come.

Father Kouzma shivered. The melancholy of the unusually early Autumn seemed to have entered into

the very marrow of his bones. He rose and opened a door.

"Wife," said he, "it is dreary, prepare us some tea."

The *popadia* was very fond of tea and its natural accompaniments, small rolls and preserves. She ran to the kitchen and ordered the maid to heat the *samovar*. The latter eagerly obeyed. In the vast territory which all the Russias comprise, no one is indifferent to tea.

Comforted by the hope of an immediate diversion, Father Kouzma returned to his study-table, and began to turn over his books and copy-books more energetically.

"About what shall I speak to them?" he murmured. "About detachment from the things of this world? Poor people! They have nothing to attach themselves to, as have the lords; but they are good lords, who bestow as much charity as they can. They gave a violin to my youngest boy last Christmas. It amuses the little fellow, and he does not play badly for one who has never been taught. 'The proofs of the existence of God?' They do not need to have it proved to them, they believe in Him enough without that. 'Of resignation to the will of Providence?' Ah! yes, resignation, every one has need of that! Resignation!"

Father Kouzma sighed, he sighed as naturally as one breathes; then he began attentively to read the text which he had under his eyes. It was a very simple homily; the old man who had written it had been detached from every thing, and resignation had been all the easier to him, because he possessed within himself a

well conditioned foundation of egotism. One resigns oneself easily to misfortunes, if they do not touch one's life or fortune, when one has the happiness of loving only oneself! The old Priest's fortune had been a sure, though small one, and his only unhappy blow had been his death, about which he had not had time to be troubled, having succumbed to an apoplectic stroke. He spoke therefore about resignation with a calm assurance, as a very simple, very natural thing, and seemed to find those who did not make an absolute profession of it, very reprehensible.

"It was easy for him!" Father Kouzma murmured, as he finished his reading. "Though our peasants are resigned to their fate already, I believe they do not accept their share of the misfortunes of this world so easily. And as to regarding them as a blessing from the Lord, who chasteneth whom He loveth, I have repeated that to myself for a long while, and I cannot accept it. I am resigned, yes, but as to being grateful—but it is very wrong for me to think thus, I, who am a priest!"

He sighed again; but fortunately his wife's head appeared through the half-opened door.

"Father Kouzma," said she, "the tea is ready, will you come?"

He rose and followed her into the dining-room. Nothing particularly pleasing rested one's eyes in this room which was not of large size, and the *samovar* itself, which in Russian households attracts the eye like the cauldron in Tenier's pictures, was dull and badly cleaned. This did not prevent the tea from being good,

however, and the Priest drank a glass of it with evident satisfaction. As his wife was pouring out some a second time, he glanced around him.

“Where are the children?” he said.

“Prascovie is ironing clothes in the kitchen, and the boys have gone off to look after their snares in the woods. Victor thinks they must have taken some game.”

“In this weather?”

“Yes, the birds hide themselves under the leaves when it rains.”

Father Kouzma made no objection to this; moreover what did it matter to him? His eldest boy Victor, was enjoying his vacation: in ten days he would return to the Theological Seminary, and then, farewell, to his excursions in the woods, till the next year. Another anxiety came to him then, an anxiety which he had thought about again and again a hundred times; what would he do with his younger son, Démiane, whose energetic and self-willed character sometimes gave him much annoyance? Until then, he had shared the studies and recreations of the lord's children, but Monsieur Roussof's sons were going to enter the gymnasium in Moscow to begin their studies; he had not the means to send his son to the gymnasium; what should he do with the strange fellow?

“He loves only music,” Father Kouzma said to himself, “and music is not a calling, it leads to nothing! The violin they have given him, has made him more fascinated with it than ever.”

He drank the contents of his glass and held it

towards his wife to fill with tea a third time ; she took it and was about filling it, when in the midst of the operation she stopped, with her hand in the air, and the spout of the tea-pot raised :

“What is that?” said she, leaning her head towards the window.

A confused sound of steps and low exclamations approached their dwelling. This sound was not that of a tumult as it would not have failed to have been in any western country : it was a sort of groan, a low-voiced lamentation ; the footsteps even seemed as though they wished to conceal themselves. This unusual noise ceased a few *metres* from the house ; the crowd seemed to be consulting together. At length the Deacon stepped out from it and went alone to the small flight of wooden steps that ornamented the Priest's house. He was bare-headed, and an unwonted gravity overshadowed his jovial face.

“What does he want with us?” asked the Priest, a little disquieted, he knew not wherefore.

Before he could go to meet the new-comer, the latter appeared on the threshold. Without raising his eyes, he made the sign of the cross three times, and saluted the husband and wife, bowing his head to his waist.

“God be with you!” said he, in his rich bass voice, that made the windows and the porcelain resound. “The Lord chasteneth whom He loveth.”

Father Kouzma tried to speak, but his tongue could make no movement. He moved his right hand, as though to question him.

“A misfortune has befallen your house,” the Deacon continued, in a trembling voice; “but Providence, in wounding you, has still spared you —”

“My sons?” cried the distracted mother.

“Only one, and he still lives.”

“Which one?” asked Father Kouzma, while his wife rushed out of doors.

“The eldest; he fell from a tree, and must have hurt himself very dangerously, for he has broken one of his legs, and cannot stand at all on the other.”

Father Kouzma fell back in his chair, and the text of his sermon returned to his mind.

“Resignation to the will of Providence,” said he. “I blasphemed, and the punishment was not long in coming!”

He remained motionless for a moment, with his hands over his eyes, while great tears coursed down his cheeks and fell on the large brass cross that trembled upon his breast; then he rose and went and prostrated himself before the images which ornamented a corner of the room.

“The Lord gave him to me,” said he, aloud, after a short prayer, “and if the Lord wishes to take him from me, may His name be blessed!”

But his resignation was only apparently real. At that same moment his son entered, borne by two robust peasants. The young man, who had fainted, looked as if he were dead. His curly hair fell over his closed eyes; and his pale cheeks, and refined features that were drawn by anguish, made his face look like a waxen one.

The bearers passed silently into the children's room, where they laid Victor on his bed. In spite of their precautions, that were so tender and so surprising on the part of the rough men, pain drew him from his fainting fit, and he gave a heart-rending cry.

"He lives!" cried his father; and then suddenly becoming firm, he immediately sent a messenger to the lord's house, to request the master to come himself, for he was a physician, and would know how to save his son.

CHAPTER II.

FATHER KOUZMA'S SERMON.

MONSIEUR ROUSSOF was a physician; not a very distinguished one, though what he had earned, added to his family patrimony, procured him a very pleasant existence. He was able to give up practice during the summer, thanks to the inveterate habit of *villegiatura*, which forces Russians to go out of town, where they find themselves very uncomfortable, instead of remaining in the city where they are settled, with a garden and all the comforts of existence.

That the summer must be spent somewhere else than at one's home, is an established custom. Monsieur Roussof did not protest against this arrangement, which permitted him to give his wife and children a breath of country air during four months of the year, without causing him to lose any of the benefits of his profession.

He soon arrived at Father Kouzma's house, and proceeded to examine the wounded youth. When he had set the broken leg, he passed his fingers gently down the young man's spine. The father, who was watching him, saw his face assume that grave expression which he had often seen by the side of many a death-bed, and his own features contracted horribly.

"I think he will live," said the physician, raising his head; "but I fear he will be deformed."

"Deformed!" repeated the Priest, raising his hands

· toward heaven, as if to implore its aid. "What is the matter with him?"

"There is some injury to the spine. Since he now lives, in all probability he will survive; but he may become a hunchback."

"A hunchback!"

"He will lose in height, at least. Keep him perfectly quiet, will you not?"

The Priest promised what the physician desired, and the latter left to send from his own house every thing that might comfort the invalid.

When Father Kouzma found himself alone by the bed of suffering, he looked for a long time at his son who was sleeping—thanks to a narcotic that Roussof had given him.

Night had come. The fine rain still beat against the window-panes, and the most mournful sadness spread over the room, which was badly lighted by a single candle and the smoky lamp before the Images. The Priest lit a taper before the child's patron saint, then returned to him.

Was it possible that that splendid figure, those delicate and graceful limbs, would become objects of ridicule. That his first-born would be a pitiable and wretched being, deprived of the joys of life, when only that morning he was happy in the possession of all the powers of a healthy, vigorous man?

"He is young," said he to himself, "he is only nineteen; at that age, every thing may be hoped. Roussof is mistaken; it is not possible!"

Sunday having come, when the divine service was

over he moved forward to the edge of the balustrade that separates the choir from what is properly called the church, in order to deliver his sermon to the assembled people; he saw all their eyes fixed upon him with an expression of expectation. These persons were ready to listen respectfully to what he was about to say to them, without hoping to derive great profit from it, either for their bodies or their souls.

“My brothers,” said Father Kouzma, casting a glance over the assemblage, “I am going to speak to you to-day about resignation to the will of Providence. We are all born in anguish and sorrow, and none of us know what God may have in reserve for us; it is well therefore, to prepare ourselves beforehand, to suffer the calamities which He may wish to send us, for trouble coming upon us suddenly, overcomes us, and leaves us without strength.”

His voice trembled; he tried to clear it by coughing twice, then he continued:

“God chasteneth whom He loveth, and we should kiss with gratitude the hand that strikes. So should I—I, who lately had two sons in perfect health——”

Speech forsook him suddenly; he tried in vain to continue. Tears streamed from his eyes as he turned quickly away to hide them from the people.

But the simple men all understood him and a murmur of sympathy passed through their ranks.

“My brothers,” said the Deacon, “let us pray for those who suffer—for the sick and the afflicted.

The crowd intoned at the same moment with the choristers, the *Parce Domine*, and there was no more thought of a sermon that day.

CHAPTER III.

THE FUTURE CHANGED.

THE autumn came, then the winter. The long nights, thick with snow, whose silence nothing disturbed, passed one after the other over the bed where Victor lay—Victor, who had become as white as the fields without, and as frail as the slender birch branches the wind waved before the window opposite.

The sole diversion of the poor being whose strength and grace was thus destroyed, was in listening to the sounds which his brother Démiane drew from his small, hoarse violin, that however was always in tune. Stretched out almost flat upon his back with his waxen-like hands spread out on the coverlet, gazing vacantly into the gray atmosphere of the sullen winter time, he was entranced by the strange music of the unconscious artist. While Démiane, who was frowning in the earnestness of his work, was endeavoring with all his soul to render the mystic sweetness of the church hymns, and with the audacity of those who know nothing, was trying to find the thirds and fifths of chords that he heard within himself without imagining that it was a master stroke, and would begin again and again, until he had acquired the softness he sought, Victor dreamed of a thousand sweet things that were lost to him.

The forest was in the spring-time season; the lilies-

of-the-valley grew by thousands in the yet short grass ; the little plants in the form of a thyrsus, which smell like orange blossoms and possess an incomparable beauty, carpeted the hollows where roots of pine trees had formerly grown ; the greenfinches chattered, the blackbirds whistled, and far, far away at the entrance of the wood, the cuckoo made its melancholy call heard at regular intervals. It was good to jump with one's feet close together into the mossy holes, and to bury one's self up to one's knees in the last autumn's leaves,—then to bound up on the other side and run into the glades, leaping over the small bushes and the stumps of trees blown down by the winter tempests. The sun descended slowly in the heavens,—sometimes they forgot to return home until suddenly a red ray would shine over the great pine trees, far, far away, half a mile distant, and passing ahead of our young vagabonds, would shimmer on the white trunk of a birch tree growing by chance in the midst of the pines.

“It is time to go home, Démiane, full time ; we shall be scolded !”

And then they ran harder and faster and jumped higher in the sunbeam, that shone in a straight line towards the house, giving them the appearance of shortening the way, but in reality lengthening it a little, and they would reach their home red, heated and out of breath, but no one paid any attention to them, and the supper seemed never so good !

“More, Démiane, more !” said Victor to his brother, who had stopped to try his E string.

Démiane began again, and the dreams began with

him. It was in autumn; the leaves were already falling, like gold pieces scattered by a prodigal hand. Those who had guns went shooting, but Father Kouzma's sons had none. So they prepared nets, and decoy-birds, and went to spread them early in the morning, so that the birds would suspect nothing at night. It was on a slender branch, slender but inflexible, where Victor had placed his best net. From below it could not be seen, owing to the leaves that grew thick in the place. Then the young man ventured on the branch; it should have bent beneath his weight, but it did not; doubtless the wood was no longer full of sap. All at once a frightful crash was heard and a painful moan, and Victor, trembling from head to foot, found himself again in his bed.

Turning very pale, he asked his brother, whose face grew dark, "What has happened?"

"I have broken my E string," Démiane answered, sadly. "I shall be obliged to do without one until Monsieur Roussof returns."

It was thus, that deprived of his E string, Démiane passed the winter, trying to replace it by ingenious artifices, and with such strings as he had, and learned to overcome difficulties which would have discouraged him under a master's eye.

However, Victor did not soon rise. His fracture had been healed for a long while, but an extraordinary weakness prevented his sitting up for more than a few minutes at a time. His features had changed their form, his face became pointed, his eyes, which had formerly been small and deep set, grew strangely large;

he was handsómer than he had been, but his beauty was painful to behold.

At last the spring returned; the Roussof family arrived a little earlier than usual, and the physician went to the priest's house almost immediately on leaving his carriage.

The window of the boys' room was open, and he turned his head towards it and was surprised to meet two black, melancholy eyes, that looked at him with an expression of sad and patient waiting.

"I know these people," he said to himself, "and yet—"

He stepped forward, and Victor's voice, so weak that it seemed to come from a spirit, wished him good-morning.

"Ah! my poor boy!" said he, hastening to cross the threshold.

He examined the young man, forced him to rise, and to stand up; the anxious father and mother asked themselves why he tormented their sick child thus—when he passed his hand gently from Victor's neck down to his waist.

The parents stifled a cry.

A slight protuberance showed itself under his thin shirt, and was shadowed on the window. With a look, Monsieur Roussof silenced the lamentations that were ready to burst forth. With his eyes dilated, his face covered with tears, Démiane looked at his brother with an expression of tenderest pity.

"Never mind, Monsieur Roussof," said the young invalid. "I am a hunchback, am I not? I have known

it for a long while! I have passed my hand so many times down my back when I was alone! And it hurt me so much!"

After the first outburst of grief was over, Father Kouzma said to the physician:

"What shall we do? If my poor son, whom may God spare! is deformed, he cannot give himself to the Lord's service! The Church only admits those of the Slavonic clergy who have no physical defect."

"Well," said Monsieur Roussof, "there is your successor!"

He pointed towards Démiane, who with his eyes still filled with the same horror, the same pity, had not stopped looking at his brother.

"You will be a priest in my place, will you not, Démiane?" said Victor, in his sweet and plaintive voice. "You will be the one who will celebrate the Divine Service, and carry in your hands the Holy of Holies, passing under the imperial door that opens the Tabernacle? I have often thought of that, brother, and, do you know? I have almost not regretted my accident, thinking that you are handsomer, stronger and cleverer than I have ever been."

"Do you wish to be a priest?" asked Monsieur Roussof, laying his hand, affectionately, on the young man's curly hair.

"I do not know," the latter replied. "Could I play on the violin?"

At this question, which Father Kouzma's theology had not foreseen, each looked at the other, a little surprised and much troubled to find an answer.

“Why not?” Monsieur Roussof said at last. “King David certainly danced before the Ark, accompanying himself on different musical instruments. And besides, he had also charmed away King Saul’s wrath with his harp. I do not see that holy orders should forbid one the innocent pleasure of playing on a violin.”

“I will be a priest, then,” Démiane answered in a submissive tone.

His father raised his right hand, and the young man prostrated himself on his knees until his forehead touched the ground; the Priest gave him his benediction, while his eyes were wet with bitter tears, remembering the day he had thus blessed his first-born. But he had learned resignation since the sad autumn days. The mother also blessed her son, then Victor made a sign to his brother to approach him.

“They gave me at the Theological Seminary some holy images to bring me happiness in my career; here, take them, they must belong to you.”

He passed around his brother’s neck a little silken cord, that held several small medals and crosses, and embraced him three times, then let himself fall back on his pillows, with the happy and weary air of convalescents.

“I am glad,” said he, “very glad! Démiane will be the man of the family. I would never have been anything but a stupid fellow.”

And his kind, full eyes, that were spiritualized by suffering, beamed on his brother in a blessing as tender, —tenderer— than that of their mother.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STORM.

“**A**RE you going to the Theological Seminary, then?” Benjamin Roussof asked Démiane, who was trying to make a sort of rustic guitar out of white wood. “Do you believe they will permit you to play music? Are you going to take your *balalaïka*?”

The young boy contemplated the work of his cunning hands, and then began to cut the wood with his knife again.

“I do not know anything about it,” said he; “if I cannot take it I will give it to you.”

“Very well,” said young Roussof, with an energetic sign of his head. “I felt sure you would give it to me. And your brother, has he one also?”

“No. Victor is very fond of music when I play it, but he does not know how to play himself.”

“What does he do to amuse himself then?”

“He listens to me.”

Benjamin looked as though he thought that was not sufficient. He would not have left a new *balalaïka* sleeping on its nail! Though he should have drawn the most inharmonious sounds from it, he would have persecuted it without mercy, taking, as far as the sounds went, their quantity for their quality. He drew from his pocket a small paper package, which he showed mysteriously to his comrade.

"Do you know what this is?" said he, with an important air.

"No. It is very small."

"Guess!"

"Let me feel of it a little." He held out his two fingers, broke the paper, and crimson with delight he exclaimed, "Strings!"

"Yes, strings, some new strings for your violin."

"I just broke my E string during Lent!" said Démiane, still overcome with joy. "Oh! well, if I can take my *balalaïka* with me, I will make another one for you alone. How did you think of this?"

"It was papa; I asked him what I should bring you as a present for this vacation. I am not rich, you know. I could not spend more than thirty *kopecks*; he told me that violin strings would give you more pleasure than anything in the world."

"Your father is good," Démiane said gravely.

He reflected for a moment, then he began to make chips of wood with greater activity.

It was very hot. The middle of July almost always brings thunderstorms, which the vulgar say is on account of the chariot of the Prophet Elias rolling in the heavens on the occasion of his feast-day, which falls on the 18th of the month; the air was heavy, and if our young people did not perceive it, Victor, who had hardly recovered from his terrible fall sufficiently to hold himself up and walk with the aid of a stick, felt wholly prostrated. Lying in the grass two steps away from his comrades, under the protecting shelter of an enormous birch tree that stood alone on the lawn of

the seigneurial garden, he seemed to be seeking coolness even from the turf, and plunged his face into the thick tufts of hardy grass.

"And you, Victor," continued Benjamin, who did not know how to remain silent for a minute, "what will you do while your brother is away?"

"I will await his return," answered Victor, who was always resigned. "He waited for me formerly when it was I who went to the Theological Seminary."

"And Paracha? what does she say to this change?"

Prascovie Markof, thus familiarly called by the diminutive of her name, was but little occupied with what took place around her. She was a young girl, nineteen years old, serious, positive, and absorbed in calculations and hopes known only to herself, and who had but one idea in the world: to marry as advantageously as possible. Unfortunately, her father had no dowry to give her, and girls without dowries are difficult to marry in all European latitudes, and even in some others.

"Paracha says nothing at all; it is all the same to her. She sews on her chemises," D miane answered.

Benjamin remained thoughtful. To make oneself chemises seemed to him not a very lofty aim, but perhaps he was not well informed as regards the mysteries of a *trousseau*. He was not aware that, to sew the linen she would take to her husband's house, a priest's daughter would willingly pass more than two-thirds of her days at the occupation.

A tall young girl, about twenty years of age, crossed the lawn and approached the young men.

“Mamma asks if you would like to play a little music?” she said to Démiane.

Her pleasant look and smile were addressed rather to Victor than his brother. The Roussof children were full of goodness, like their parents, and their compassionate kindness was given more particularly to the poor invalid since the accident.

“Let us go!” exclaimed Démiane, who ran on ahead with Benjamin, while Mademoiselle Roussof walked more slowly by Victor’s side, who still painfully dragged himself along with the aid of a stick.

As they approached the drawing-room, the well-known chords of a sonata for the piano and violin reached their ears, and they stopped to listen.

Démiane played on his miserable instrument with astonishing skill and ease. His fantastic fingering little heeded the rules of art; many notes would not have found grace in a master’s ear, but a wild, fierce, passionate feeling carried the youthful musician far beyond this real world, the poor piano, the bad violin, the music that was difficult to read and difficult to execute. After stumbling through ten measures, a melodious phrase issued forth. Démiane gathered it up with the end of his bow and carried it to heights where the composer himself would not have disdained applauding it as it passed.

“Let us sit down here; we will hear just as well, and it is not so warm,” said Mademoiselle Roussof, pointing to a bench placed under the drawing-room windows.

They sat down in silence and listened for a long

while. Sometimes, when the discord between the two instruments rose to a veritable quarrel, Madame Roussof stopped short.—“Let us begin again,” she would say in her tranquil voice; and Démiane, calmed by her coolness, took up the confusing page and unravelled it slowly.

It was these patient lessons that had formed the growing talent of the young boy. Without them, he would only have been a common violinist. Thanks to this half-maternal education, he felt himself becoming an artist, while at the same time his character became softened, and his manners grew, little by little, superior to those of the people about him.

Agrippine Roussof, whom her relations and friends familiarly called Groucha, turned towards her pitiable companion.

“He gets on well,” said she, smiling.

“Do you think so?” Victor said timidly, while answering her smile.

“He has made great progress since last summer. He has the making of an artist in him.”

Victor’s eyes gleamed with pride, but the light died out of his look, and he sighed.

“Of what use will it be to him when he is a priest?” he asked sadly.

“It is always of use, were it only on account of the beautiful thoughts to which music gives birth. Does it not seem to you at times that it is like a prayer? And at church would one pray half as well if the choristers did not sing hymns?”

“Yes, certainly,” Victor answered with some hesita-

tion; "singing is allowed; but the violin—I never heard of a priest who played on the violin."

"Well, Démiane will be the first!" Groucha said gayly.

If this amiable girl had chosen a motto, she would certainly have raised on her flag: "All for the best!" But her optimism did not limit itself to declaring that everything was perfect under the moon's rays; she toiled unceasingly with her heart and her agile hands, to improve what she called excellent, aided by her parents whose broad views and abundant charity knew no bounds except in the comparative smallness of their revenue; she had thus become a tangible, smiling and peaceful providence, from whom emanated a comforting atmosphere on all human beings, great or small, who suffered near her.

Victor, seeing her absorbed in listening to a favorite *adagio*, ventured to raise his eyes to her white face, which was more touching than beautiful, more amiable than regular, and whose principal charm lay in the brightness of two dark-grey eyes, which were soft and luminous, and which—one knew not why—made one, in the young girl's presence, think of the pictures of Charity holding two children in her arms.

The calm face, the cheeks tinted with a delicate rose-color, the lovely form, neither too slender nor too stout, but as pleasant to the eye as a May morning, had always presided over Victor's destiny. When he was very young and not behaving well, they threatened not to allow him to play with Mademoiselle Roussof.

The latter, who was as grave as an Infanta, would—

thanks to her three years' superiority over the companion of her plays—preach him a little sermon and accept with a dignified air the promises he made her not to do so any more, and it would all end in a little lunch, and not a few preserves.

It was thus, by a moral, as well as material ascendancy, that Groucha had a great influence over her young friend's life. He respected her to that degree, that he called her Mademoiselle Roussof when alone and had never allowed himself to address her by the name of Groucha, since he was six or seven years old. He hardly knew by what name to call the feeling he had for her: the deep and confiding tenderness, the security when near her, the discouragement when she was away; but why give a name to such delicious impressions? In naming them we take away that which is the velvet of the peach, or the satin of the jasmine's white petals. Such things are felt, are divined, and are not expressed. One day, however, before the accident had blighted his life, a sort of light illumined Victor's soul, and might have revealed to him, had he wished it, something more positive. His father and mother were talking about his future, of the sacrifices he cost them, and quite naturally the future marriage of the young aspirant to apostleship came up.

"Must I marry?" asked Victor, rather suddenly.

"You have known you must from your cradle!" his mother replied. "One would say that you thought of it now for the first time in your life."

"They have spoken to me," said she, turning towards Father Kouzma, "of the priest of Béresovka's second

daughter; she will have money, and she is only eleven years old. We must put ourselves on a good footing with those people, so that the marriage will arrange itself, when our boy will have reached the proper age."

Victor did not answer, but allowed his parents to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the bargain. For it was nothing else. A great repugnance had suddenly seized him at the thought of that girl eleven years of age, whom he did not know, whom no one of his family knew, but of whom they had talked as of something to be bought. His repugnance extended even to the idea of marriage itself, and as he was a thoughtful fellow, he asked himself what was the cause of this new and extraordinary feeling.

"To leave this parish!" said he to himself, with his heart wrung at the thought; "that will be hard!"

Then he said to himself, that he would not be obliged to leave the parish, for, on the contrary, he could bring his young wife there.

"If she should displease the Roussof family!" he thought with a slight shiver.

He seemed to see Mademoiselle Roussof's grey eyes turn away from the bride with the calm disdain that expressed her great dissatisfaction.

"Never!" said he to himself; "never a wife that would displease Mademoiselle Roussof."

Instead of fathoming this dangerous problem, he gave himself up to hunting small birds, which, alas! turned out no better with him, and ever since, it was with a joyful feeling that he saw the honors and

prosperity belonging to the eldest of the family pass to his brother.

"I shall not marry the priest of Béresovka's daughter," he had said to himself; "I will not marry at all! Who would wish an ugly hunchback like myself?"

And these reflections, far from saddening him, brought a new serenity into his existence. It was therefore, with a feeling of modesty and timidity, which was quite natural for him in regard to so important a person, that he raised his eyes on Groucha and gave himself up to the pleasure of contemplating her sweet and restful face. But she did not perceive Victor's admiration; with her eyes fixed on a cluster of white rose-bushes, which certainly she did not see, she dreamed as she listened to the *adagio*, and her reverie took a melancholy color, for her mouth grew sad, and her chestnut colored eye-lashes drooped on her cheeks which had become slightly pale.

"It is beautiful, is it not?" said Victor in a low voice, who would have made any sacrifice to have restored its wonted expression to her face.

She answered by a movement of her head and remained silent, absorbed by her inner vision. The rolling of distant thunder stilled for an instant a delicate *pianissimo* executed indoors on the two instruments, then the music continued loudly.

"What are you thinking of, Mademoiselle?" said Victor, incapable of keeping the question to himself any longer.

She blushed slightly, then smiled.

"Of a thousand things far away," she said.

“Far away?”

She pointed with her hand to the threatening clouds which were moving towards them rapidly.

“Farther away than the storm,” she said, with the same slightly melancholy smile.

The rolling of the thunder approached, and its last echo seemed to die over the house.

“They are playing the piano,” said Victor a little nervously, “shall we not tell them that it thunders? Perhaps they do not hear it?”

“The storm may pass,” said Groucha, “let us wait a little.”

The sonata continued within doors; but Victor, who was disquieted, opened and shut his feverish hands. A universal superstition in Russia, which is found among the highest classes as well as the lowest, forbids the playing of music during a thunder storm; it would seem as though the audacious performer wished to brave the thunderbolts and battle with the power which God manifests in them. The Roussof family did not share this prejudice, but they yielded to it, that they might not shock their inferiors, or even their equals, who were not so free as themselves from the fetters of a thousand superstitious beliefs.

A violet-colored gleam of lightning dazzled the eyes of our friends, and made them rise suddenly from their rustic seat, while the noise of the thunder deafened them. They put their hands to their ears and entered the drawing-room as quickly as possible, where Madame Roussof and Démiane were resuming their *allegro* that had been interrupted by all the noise. Only, as the

sky had become very dark, they had lighted candles, and it was by this artificial light that they were continuing their practising.

"Mamma," said Groucha, gently, with a smile that made excuses for all weaknesses and brought her mother back to the necessity of making every possible concession to them, "it thunders very hard."

"Démiane," said Victor, still trembling with emotion and a little anger at the sight of his younger brother's coolness, "it thunders! how can you play on the violin?"

"We will wait till the storm is over," said Madame Roussof, rising quietly, "and then we will begin again."

"How tiresome!" grumbled Démiane, vexed at finding himself interrupted in the ardor of his work; "what difference can it make whether it thunders or not?"

"It is the prophet Elias driving about up there!" said Monsieur Roussof, who entered the room; for the result of a thunder-storm is to gather into one room all the inhabitants of a house, impelled absolutely by the same feeling as sheep, which huddle together at the first flash of lightning.

"What is the prophet Elias to me?" growled the young rebel.

"Oh! Démiane!" exclaimed Victor, thoroughly shocked. Another flash of lightning, less vivid than the others, traversed the darkened sky, and every one made the sign of the cross, excepting Monsieur Roussof, who continued throwing over the company his calm and rather mocking glance; then they waited a little longer, and the storm seeming to be taking flight, the

musicians went to the piano, and the sonata began again, but Victor did not take the same pleasure in listening, nor the others in executing it. After one piece all said they were tired, and returned to their occupations.

While Victor, with his brother, was going to their humble little house, reproaching him in regard to his indifference about the thunder, Monsieur Roussof stopped his wife as she was on her way to glance into the kitchen.

“If that Démiane is ever a priest,” said he, “I know some one who will be very much surprised.”

“Don’t you think he has a fitness for it?” asked Madame Roussof, without appearing astonished. They were never astonished at anything in that family.

Monsieur Roussof laughed silently, and concluded by saying, by way of peroration to a speech that he kept to himself :

“They both have missed their calling: Victor in not being a priest, and Démiane in preparing himself to become one. But the young rogue has not yet made his vows, and the ways of Providence are impenetrable.”

“And do you feel inclined to prevent it?” Madame Roussof asked.

Her husband nodded his head affirmatively; after which they exchanged a smile, and turning away from each other went to their different duties.

CHAPTER V.

AT THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

DÉMAINE however entered the Theological Seminary and passed a whole scholastic year. He had taken a few books and his precious violin in his trunk with him, but in the rare letters which he wrote to his parents he spoke of neither the one nor the other; in truth, the fate of these things interested the Priest and his wife infinitely less than that of the shirts and stockings which they must very soon replace.

The year ended, Démiane returned, and every one found him very much changed. His youthful gayety only returned by fits and starts, his character had become sad, like his face. He had not been able to bend his body to the sedate walk of his comrades; from being brusque and impetuous, he had become awkward and ungainly.

"They have not made him handsomer for us," said Madame Roussof to her husband, after the young man made his first visit on his return.

"He is at the awkward age," replied the philosopher.

"He is seventeen and a half years old, he ought not to be so clumsy. What will he do with his arms and legs next year, if this year he is already so embarrassed by them?"

"God will see to it!" replied the skeptical physician. "And his music—did you talk together about it?"

"He acted as though he did not care to speak of it. I believe a drama has taken place at the Seminary."

"Make him tell you about it!"

"He would not, but Groucha will try and draw it out from Victor."

"Power of machiavelism!" said Roussof, quietly. "When you have learned it you will tell it to me."

"Of course."

Alas! in fact, a drama had been played at the Seminary. First, Démiane's books had disappeared without returning, because all profane reading was useless in a place that is wholly consecrated to the study of holy works. The young man would have consoled himself for this misfortune, had not a graver one followed.

After being here a while, Démiane, finding one day that he had an hour of freedom, went to his cell and unpacked his precious violin; after tuning it, he hastened to assure himself that he had lost none of his good or bad qualities.

To put himself in harmony with the walls of so venerable a place, he began by playing a church hymn; immediately the curious heads of his comrades appeared at the door of the corridor.

"What are you doing?" the boldest asked.

"I am playing the violin, as you see."

"Has the Father Superior allowed you to do so?"

"No. Must I get permission?"

"I do not know."

A Father Inspector arrived in the meanwhile and the same dialogue was repeated, word for word.

A little astonished, the Father Inspector went to the Father Superior, and reported what he had just seen and heard. The latter meditated and implored the light of the Holy Spirit.

Now, every one knows that the Holy Spirit never refuses its light to those who implore it, and the reason of this condescension is easy to be understood; each one imploring help from on high for his inner conscience, is the sole judge in regard to the moment chosen by the light to appear; he applies that to his theories and his needs; and afterwards thanks Providence, who has, however, had nothing to do with it. It is thus that the thing is done in all latitudes, and even in all the longitudes that have been explored up to the present, from the Red Skin, who consults his Manitou, to the Reverend Father Superior of the Seminary of Z.

When this worthy personage had received from Heaven the additional light for which he had asked, or imagined that he had received it — which is exactly the same thing — he sent for the scholar Démiane: “With the thing which he has introduced into our establishment,” added the good man.

Démiane and “the thing” arrived, one carrying the other, and the following dialogue astonished the walls of the Seminary:

“What is that?” asked the Superior.

“Reverend Father, it is my violin.”

“What do you do with it?”

“I play it.”

The Reverend Father reflected for a moment.

“Let me see it,” said he.

Démiane let him "see it," or rather hear it, and played — for he was cunning — a pious hymn, with all desirable unction and slowness.

"Hem!" said the Superior, caressing his beard. "Hem! that's not bad. Who gave it to you?"

"Monsieur Roussos, the lord of our village."

"A nobleman?"

"Yes, Reverend Father, a nobleman."

"Is he in the service of the Government?"

"No, Reverend Father, he is a physician."

"Ah! he is a physician, and he gave you that?"

Démiane thought that the Reverend Father Superior hid his light under a thick layer of real humility or pretended ignorance, unless the adjective of the one might pass to the other, interchangeably, but he kept a respectful silence.

"It is with violins that they make people dance, do they not?" the Superior asked.

"Yes, my Reverend Father, and with many other instruments also."

"Hem!" said the dignitary, "that may be. But the violin is not a canonical instrument, it cannot be found mentioned in the Scriptures. Now, the trumpet can be found in them; it was to the sound of trumpets that the walls of Jericho fell; the harp is a canonical instrument; holy King David held it in affection during the whole course of his existence; but nowhere is there mention made of the violin."

Démiane listened, and clasped to his heart the uncanonical instrument, knowing it was in danger.

"Do not touch that instrument again as long as you

remain among us," continued the Superior, "and moreover, I beg you will place it in my hands. When you return to your family, I will return it to you; at present it could only divert you from your studies and the destiny that awaits you."

Démiane, who was excited by the greatness of the danger, avoided it by a stroke of genius.

"I am ready to obey, my Reverend Father," said he. "But permit me to show you that all the noise of my violin resides in these strings here. I will give you the strings, but, I implore you, permit me to keep the violin!"

While he was speaking he removed the strings and laid them before the Superior.

"Why do you value that piece of wood so highly?" asked the latter, frowning suspiciously.

Démiane blushed, for he was about to say something not quite true, feeling that he must save his dear treasure.

"Excuse me, my Reverend Father," said he, "when my brother was very ill I played church hymns to him; he could not assist at the divine service, and my violin gave him pleasure; it was his only consolation."

The excellent man was touched by this very simple plea.

"Keep the wood," said he, "and give me the strings. But you must not be heard again!"

"That cannot be, since I leave the strings with Your Grace," the happy Démiane said hypocritically.

He received His Grace's benediction, and hurried to his cell. At night, when all in the Seminary were

snoring, he took from a hiding-place the strings Benjamin Roussof had given him, and adjusted them to his violin, then he made them sound under his sheets, with his head buried under the bed-clothes, at the risk of smothering.

He kept his treasure, but he could not make use of it. This punishment of Tantalus made him morose. Then, one day when he was alone, he thought of running his fingers over the strings, without using his bow. Playing in this mute way, he acquired great dexterity in fingering, and his memory being no longer guided by his ear, developed in an extraordinary manner.

But he disliked everything at the Seminary; he had entered it too late not to observe the faults in that kind of education, and moreover, having grown up in full liberty, like a wild colt, the rein and curb of the rules seemed intolerable to him.

The foundation of resignation, that among Russians accompanies the most seeming, and even the most real lack of discipline, made Démiane endure things that would have caused a Frenchman to jump over the walls without delay; but when he returned to his home he carried with him a sort of sullen resolve not to endure any longer what so displeased him. This resolution was not of the kind one announces to one's father on a lovely evening after dinner. It needed precautions, and above all allies. The precautions to be taken were not impossible, in spite of Démiane's inexperience, but as to the allies, where should he find them? The young man's heart beat fast the first time he touched upon the subject with his father.

The evening was a superb one, and the moon was reflected in the pond in a way that would have satisfied all the poets of the globe. The frogs, which are as necessary to a Russian pond as are the banks that surround it, were croaking with that admirable unity with which all are familiar. Do frogs understand so much as, or more than modern musicians in regard to composition and the science of music? From the earliest antiquity these harmonious musicians have combined their solos and their choruses with a cleverness and elegance that very few operas manifest now-a-days. Was it not the poised measure of their nightly hymns that inspired the Greek tragic writers with the refrains of their choruses and the rhythmed plaints of their master works? I defy any one who has listened on a beautiful summer's night to the croaking of a lonely frog, who is soon accompanied by a formidable orchestra, with eloquent *pianos* and *crescendos* that are full of majesty, not to think of some *chef-d'œuvre* of modern art, such as the *Bénédiction des poignards*—(all proper proportion being kept, of course, and in this comparison all due respect being paid).

Démiane's soul was full of secret anguish; the strange, almost unhealthy friendship that his brother had for him, made him hope for his efficient aid. But, on the other hand, he saw in Victor weaknesses and terrors, that were due, doubtless, to his early education, and from which he had freed himself, one cannot tell how, unless by living almost always alone in the woods, and the rest of the time with his dear violin.

"Do you love me?" said he, as he clasped his arm

around the invalid's neck, while they were sitting on a bench, at the end of their father's garden, close to the grassy banks of the pond.

"Do I love you! Ah! my poor D miane, I can only say, that I have scarcely lived all winter; I remember nothing since you went away to the Seminary."

The young scholar clasped his brother affectionately in his arms.

"You would not like to see me unhappy, would you?"

"Certainly not! but why should you be unhappy?"

D miane drew himself up, then with a firm voice, that was moderated designedly, said:

"Victor, I do not wish to be a priest."

His brother suddenly trembled, and made the sign of the cross.

"You — you are out of your mind, D miane. What did you say?"

"I do not wish to be, and I will not be a priest," D miane repeated with the same firmness.

"May God and all the Saints protect us! The evil spirit has turned your head! Come back to yourself, brother! Why should you wish to resist God's will?"

"It is not God's will that I should be a priest, Victor, or else He would never have put into my heart this mad love for music, or else moreover the Fathers at the Seminary would not have forbidden my playing the violin. If they had permitted me to play, I would perhaps have been a good priest, no worse than any other,—but they forbade me. I will play the

violin,—yes, I will! or else I will become wicked and do every one harm.”

“Silence, Démiane, silence! If they should hear you,” said Victor, terrified.

“Well, let them hear me! Some time or other I must tell them; I will never enter upon any career in which I cannot play the violin. And what harm is there in loving music? Is not one’s heart full of good things, full even to tears, when one plays some beautiful piece of music?”

“That is true, she said that music resembled a prayer,” said Victor in a low voice.

“Whom do you mean? She spoke well!”

“Mademoiselle Roussof,” murmured the young man, ashamed at having alluded to so respectable a person with so little ceremony.

“She is good; she will help me with all her power,” continued Démiane, without paying any attention to his elder brother’s confusion. “She understands that one loves music better than anything else in the world! And her mother too, and her father also! They will help me.”

Victor shook his head doubtfully.

“What do you wish to do, then?” asked he, with his practical mind.

“I wish to play the violin.”

“And then?”

“That is all! Does not that suffice?”

“But it is not a vocation,” observed Victor. One plays on the violin for pleasure, as the Roussofs play the piano. But the rest of the time, what will you do?”

"You do not understand me!" said Démiane impatiently; "I wish to be a violinist; I will give concerts, they will pay to listen to me and I will earn a great deal of money."

"Does one earn money that way?" asked Victor, who was not convinced.

"Enormous fortunes."

There was silence; the frogs themselves, for a moment stopped their concert; our friends meditated each in his own way, during the stillness.

"Father will not allow it!" said Victor, thus ending his reflections. Démiane made no objection to this. Evidently Father Kouzma would not consent to his son's giving all his time to music.

It was astonishing that he had permitted him to do so until now; but his excuse was, that he considered the violin about the same as a lathe or a carpenter's bench—one of those useful toys that one gives to children for their New Year's gift. The noise of the violin had not disturbed him, more than a saw or a plane would have done, and certainly much less than a hammer driving nails into sonorous wood.

"Well," continued the elder brother, "if you would like to enter some office in Government service, where one can advance, father perhaps would consent to it."

"No," said Démiane, determinedly, "I do not wish to enter an office."

"But just to make a beginning," Victor intimated.

"To begin what?"

"Anything so that you may not have to return to the Seminary," timidly suggested the young Machiavelli.

This idea was judicious enough, but how could it be carried out?

"One must first have a place," Démiane said, shrugging his shoulders.

"Ask Monsieur Rousof about it!"

"Yes — I can ask him — but still, would father consent to it?"

"Perhaps," said Victor, feigning a hope which he did not have.

"And then, if he refuses — so much the worse!"

"You will return to the Seminary?"

"I will run away!"

Victor shuddered with horror, and, despite his courage, our conspirator glanced around him; but they were quite alone — alone with the frogs who intoned a hymn of triumph in honor of his bold resolution.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHERRY TREES.

MADemoiselle ROUSSOF, seated near a window in her bed-room, was sewing on a little peasant's shirt, that was made of ugly, bright, pink cotton; she was very busy fitting to the arm-holes two squares of intense red stuff, without which, no one knows why, a peasant's shirt is a despicable object and unworthy of being worn except in the meanest kind of labor.

While her needle was making a little sharp and regular noise in the cotton, Mademoiselle Roussof was thinking of far away things—as she had said to Victor the year before—and her wandering mind led her far from the pink shirt and the belfry in the form of an inverted turnip, which shut off her view on the other side of the pond. This is what she saw in her reverie.

She saw a green plain, green with the velvety look of well-watered meadows; and in truth, a stream ran through it, sometimes ornamented with a few willows, but oftener simply fringed with forget-me-nots, which were so full of flowers and so thick, that one saw their pale blue color stand out on the green, even when more than a hundred steps from them.

The plain was deserted; a mill, which was only inhabited when it was running, that is to say, when the stream consented to be neither frozen nor dry,

stood stately in the lovely place, attracting the eye from the black color of its old wood which had been beaten against by the storms of many winters. A water-gate closed the current of the stream, and a small bridge, hastily made of two beams, spanned the water-gate at a certain height. This bridge, strangely enough, rested on two piles of bricks that were eaten away by moss, and worn away by the hard knocks of floating ice in the winter, but which were still solid and almost majestic; these piers, which were much older than the bridge they supported, had witnessed many events, but stones, alas! do not speak. As to the bridge itself, it formerly had a railing, but it had fallen into the river on some very stormy night and no one had since seen it, nor taken the trouble to replace it.

The plain was a valley, for on two sides rose small hills, whose steep descent abruptly terminated in level land. On the left, extended some woods of pines and birches. The sandy ground was torn here and there into white rifts, and some roads—which were white as well—climbed over the summits and mysteriously disappeared at some unknown point.

On the right, a little town was spread out, having a Monastery as its principal landmark. This Monastery, which was something like a fortress—as are all Russian convents—enclosed within its high walls, composed of divers buildings, a church, several chapels, gardens and apple orchards, all of which descended gently to the plain and were sheltered by great trees, some of which—strangely trimmed half way up, instead of at their trunks—spread out to the sky numberless branches,

which were relatively young, that is to say, about fifty years old. These queer looking trees were to be found especially in the direction of the opposite heights, as though they had been expressly cut away in order to let one see the hills. But it was not the caprice of some owner who had thus mutilated them, any more than it was chance that made the grass of the luxuriant meadow so green and so fertile—the stream was the Bérésina, and it was French bullets that had deprived the great willows of their crowns.

A few leagues from the spot where the bloody battle of Borodino was fought, a large body of troops had an engagement with a Russian division; the little Monastery was cruelly bombarded, and many men fraternized in their death agony on the banks of the stream. No one counted the corpses which strewed the plain; the inhabitants of the Monastery did not go to identify their dead under the murderous fire of the French batteries, which lasted three days, and when the army drew off, the plunderers of the battle-field had already despoiled the victims. They buried the Russians and the French in the same graves, and the monks of the Monastery, after having accomplished this pious duty, devoted their prayers during many long years, to the repose of the souls of those, on both sides, who had found death far from their homes.

Mademoiselle Roussof knew all this; she had walked with thoughtful footsteps over the grass-grown paths that surrounded those sacred hillocks; she had listened to the story of those three days, a story of fire and blood—the same, alas! which has been told for centu-

ries of all besieged cities, all violated territories, from the obscure corners of Asia to the heart even of capitals—and it was with deep pity that she had gazed on the simple landscape, which was so smiling in its lines, so full of welcome in its contours, and so tragic when one learned its legend.

There are situations, and combinations of events, which indelibly engrave on one's memory certain facts which would otherwise have no importance. Under the influence of some emotions, our heart opens to new feelings and unveils itself to us, in one instant, better than it could have done, during many peaceful years. When Mademoiselle Roussof listened to the story of those heroic combats, in which both Russians and French had shown an almost superhuman bravery, a young man was walking near the group of people of which she was one, and was watching on her face the traces of the emotions to which this epic had given birth.

What had he seen on that calm, pale face that had inspired him with so much enthusiasm and veneration? Was it the pity that is innate in some souls, which betrayed itself in the pearly paleness, in the trembling of the half-open lips? Was it the kindness in those grey eyes which bent over the graves with so much sweetness, or the charming grace with which the young girl let fall upon the hillock, the bunch of flowers she had gathered in the plain, rendering thus to death, that to which death had given birth.

What matters it? When Mademoiselle Roussof raised her thoughtful eyes, which had been for a long time fixed upon the ground, she read in those of the

young physician, that he thought like herself, and that she had found a friend.

They did not speak, for they did not know each other. Valérien Moutine went to pass a few days with the archimandrite of M——, whom he had known since his childhood; the accident of a broken wheel had obliged the Roussos family, who were going to their estates, to pass two days in the little town. They visited the convent; and the archimandrite, who was happy at meeting intelligent people and being able to converse a little, did the honors of the place to them, and that was how Groucha found herself walking along the banks of the Bérésina, with an unknown man, the remembrance of whom she was to carry away with her.

Only two days! It was a very short time in which to make an impression that was to last all her life; but during those two days, every thing had conspired against her. While her parents were seated with the archimandrite, enjoying some rare tea, which had been brought expressly from the heart of China to please the good old man—a princely gift from some troubled soul to whom he had brought back peace,—they had sent “the children” to amuse themselves in the garden,—the children were Groucha and her brother Benjamin,—and the young physician had followed them under the pretext that he was not yet twenty-five years old.

The cherry trees grew in such profusion in a corner of the orchard, that according to the lay brother’s assertion who was conducting them about, they lost at least two quintals of them every year.

“It is not that they are exactly lost,” said the honest

fellow, "for the good Lord's birds eat them. The blossoms have hardly fallen when the little plunderers come and perch themselves on those trees opposite, and on the walls, or wherever they can find a place; they seem to be watching them grow and redden; but never fear they will touch them before they are ripe! From time to time they come and give a thrust with their beaks and then fly away. But when a beautiful sunshiny day, followed by a good warm night, has ripened them, long before dawn our *gourmands* are in the trees, and you would say there were more birds than cherries. When one approaches they do not even disturb themselves!"

"Do you not place any nets there?" the young man asked.

"The Father archimandrite does not wish it, he says there will always remain enough for us."

Involuntarily the young people exchanged a look and smile. Benjamin was already stealing off under the branches, in the cherry tree copse; his sister wished to stop him.

"Ah!" said the lay brother, "you may let him go, he cannot do any harm there. The trees grow there at God's pleasure."

He followed Benjamin and the young people went behind him.

In truth, the trees grew in full liberty; the branches springing up from their trunks, entwined within each other, and forming bowers were lopped off in order to form covered paths, where they walked at the time of gathering. These paths followed no regular plan,

but they turned capriciously, according to the fancy of those primitive gardeners. After a few steps Groucha stopped and so did her companion. Benjamin and the lay brother had disappeared in the copse; they heard their voices but could not see them. The young girl raised her eyes: a milky light fell upon them from the white arch. They could not see the sky, they could not perceive any trace of cultivation; above their heads, around them, were only the black branches and the milk-white blossoms, whose petals were scattered over the grass at their feet. Mademoiselle Roussof felt her eyes become moist with tears, and she lowered her eyelids to hide the emotion which she thought was absurd and which she could not explain to herself. A slight movement that she made as she leaned against a stronger trunk shook the cherry tree, and a shower of blossoms fell on her head. There were some in her hair, on her neck, on her dress, on her hands, everywhere that the delicate impalpable flowers could find a place to rest themselves. She smiled to conceal her embarrassment, and the movement of her head which accompanied it, shook the petals all around her.—Valérien stooped quickly, held out his hands, and gathered the flowers that had touched her.

All this took place in a moment, without a word having been said. They continued their walk towards the place where Benjamin's voice guided them, and came out at last from the white cloud that had enveloped them.

The sight of the blue sky seemed to give back to Groucha the calm she had lost in the disquieting

atmosphere of the cherry trees; they took a turn around the large, almost wild garden, and went back to their elders, exchanging only a few common-place words.

“Oh! mamma,” exclaimed Benjamin, “if you only knew how many cherries there will be in six weeks!”

Groucha said nothing, but her cheeks were tinted with a deeper rose, and Valerien looked out of the window.

In the autumn they passed through M—— again, and strangely, Valérien was also there at the same time. Their relations with the good archimandrite became more friendly and closer; he sent a basket of cherries to Benjamin, and Madame Roussof returned him one with plums. They passed a charming day; it rained a little, the trees had lost their leaves, and the grass was growing yellow, but they went, nevertheless, to walk in the meadows. When they were obliged to pass over the famous bridge, Benjamin ventured on it fearlessly; but his parents declared they would not risk themselves on it, and preferred to make a *détour*. The young physician, who was already on the other side of it, seeing Mademoiselle Roussof hesitate, held out his hand to her.—Why did Groucha step resolutely on the shaking planks and put her right hand into the one he offered her?—And why, without his having pressed it in any other way than to sustain her, did she feel that that man offered her his life? All such acts are mysteries that cannot be solved.

The spring returned, and they stopped again at the Monastery, only for a longer while this time. The

archimandrite, who was passionately fond of music, presented the Roussofs to a family in the town who possessed an excellent piano, and he passed a delightful evening hearing Madame Roussof and her daughter play together, and singly, some of the best works of the great masters.

"I will go to see you," he said to Groucha, when she took leave of him ; "I will go so that you may play for me. I have not heard anything so good for twenty years."

They begged the kind old man to keep his promise, but the young physician was not included in the invitation. Monsieur and Madame Roussof had hardly taken notice of the youth's existence, who said almost nothing, and was satisfied in listening to every one else.

This was why Groucha, as she plied her needle, thought of "far away" things. She reproached herself for thinking of them, and still she did not wish to entertain any other thoughts.

A noise of bells drew her attention to the road. She could only see a very small portion of it on the bridge over the dam, and she had to wait quite a while. In the country, one becomes very clever at distinguishing the difference of sounds made by different vehicles. What was coming was neither a *telega* nor a light calèche ; consequently this visit could not be that of a near neighbor. The heavy rolling of the wheels, the weight of the equipage, that shook the ground for some distance, the loudness of the large bells, all announced a majestic berlin, a carriage come from afar, and drawn by six horses.

Indeed a large landau came in sight on the bridge, and a black form, around which floated veils made of thin material, appeared at the carriage window opposite. She saw a white face, and a hand whiter still, that was raised gently and made her a salute that resembled a benediction.

“It is the archimandrite!” said Groucha to herself, feeling at once a pang at her heart. “And he has come alone!”

She realized then, for the first time, that she had been waiting for Valérien for two months.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ARCHIMANDRITE ARSÈNE.

“**Y**OU did not expect me?” said the archimandrite, while they were hurrying to serve him tea.

He was seated in a large leather arm-chair, in the shelter of a green blind, and face and figure seemed to express rest and satisfaction.

The archimandrite Arsène was not an ordinary man. A great deal too much has been written in novels about those who throw themselves into a cloister to heal some incurable wound, and yet it is the truth sometimes. He whom they now called Father Arsène, had been a brilliant naval officer; when still young he had commanded a frigate, and, during his leaves-of-absence, Petersburg had never known a more charming member of society. Suddenly, just as his career seemed established, when Court favor assured him the most promising future, he had left the world and entered a monastery, like any novice of sixteen. They said, and he permitted them to say it, that the grief caused by his mother's death had made life insupportable to him; but it is probable that another grief closer still, one of those which one wishes to hide in one's own heart, had preceded or accompanied the one of which he had made a pretext for his resolution.

Certain monastic rules in Russia allow the retention of personal fortune. One may be compelled to live as

simply as a lay brother and possess at the same time considerable income; these revenues, which are not the property of the convent, permit the monks to do many good works outside of their pious duties. Doubtless, in cases where this fortune would become an object of scandal, he who possessed it would be obliged to renounce its use; but in regard to that of Father Arsène, no one ever had any occasion to complain or take offence at it.

After ten years of humility, being promoted by general desire to the rank of prior or archimandrite of the monastery in which he had made his vows, the naval officer immediately established a military discipline in it, which surprised every one, and produced the most extraordinary results. At the end of six months not only were there no more fleas in the convent, but the walls which were kept whitewashed retained their new freshness; the floors, which were carefully scrubbed, scraped and sprinkled with sand, recalled the deck of the vessel which the brave man once commanded. There were no more cobwebs in the corners, no more heaps of dust in the windows, everything was as shining and clean as on board ship.

The metamorphosis extended farther still. Father Arsène's enterprising spirit needed some other aliment besides the church services. He organized a choir, found the antique psalmodies, and re-established the sacred chants in their early purity. Pitilessly banishing from the choirs those who sang falsely, he gathered together a *quartette* which became celebrated, even in a country where almost all the convents are renowned

for the excellence of their church music. But this employment, which was purely intellectual left the monks long hours of idleness, which were gilded by the fine name of hours of meditation. Father Arsène did not wish that there should be so much meditation, and he undertook to search for some less ideal occupation.

One day as he was walking outside of the monastery enclosure, leaning on a cane whose aid he needed, for he sometimes suffered from the gout, he stopped before a field belonging to the community, and from which until then they had never been able to raise any kind of produce. The ground furnished with deplorable profusion a particular kind of thistle, whose rough, firm heads obstinately refused to make even the most meagre forage. They uprooted these obstinate plants twenty times, they ploughed and harrowed the field, they sowed it with grass and grain, and in the spring it was thistles only that came up, the same identical thistles, which seemed to say: "We are here to remain by your leave, and we will remain here."

Wearied out, the community had bought an ass, and put it out to pasture in this place, which ought to have been a realm of delight for him; but the ass grew thin from that time, and stood out on the hill-side looking like a skeleton, for the thistles prevented the grass from growing, and were not of the kind that asses can eat. To prevent his dying they were obliged to give the poor beast some oats, contrary to all the rules of sobriety practised in the monastery.

Father Arsène contemplated the ass' leanness, and said to himself, in spite of his religious principles, that

without doubt the ways of Providence were sometimes inscrutable, when a thought suggested itself. Going to the ungrateful piece of land, which had no need of any enclosure, alas ! on the contrary, they were obliged to attach its resisting tenant to a post so that he should not seek better fortune elsewhere — the archimandrite picked off the heads of a few of the finest specimens of this wilful flora, and carried them home with him.

For several days Father Arsène seemed so pre-occupied that the monks did not dare to speak to him, in spite of his great goodness. Not that they were afraid of being badly received, but they felt that their superior had some idea at work in his head, and they would not have caused him a distraction or a care for anything in the world.

Towards the middle of the second week, the monastery was convoked, even to the last lay brother, and Father Arsène delivered himself thus, in the presence of those who were subordinate to him :

“My dear brothers, my dear children, we are very wrong ever to blame Providence, when it is with ourselves alone and our weaknesses, that we should find fault in regard to our troubles. You all know the thistle-field, which extends down to the banks of the Bérésina, and none of you are unaware how useless and even troublesome we have found it. However, it contained a richness which we have not known how to appreciate, and which the Lord disclosed to me the other day. Those thistles are carding thistles, a rare kind which is much sought after ; with the wool from our sheep, which we have had such trouble to weave until

now, we will be able to make excellent cloths, which will henceforth clothe you. If the will of Heaven does not prove contrary to it, our community will make a net profit out of it of two thousand roubles a year."

This communication was received with surprise: they did not dare to believe it. How could those thistles be good for anything? They were obliged however, to yield to evidence when two workmen brought from Moscow, taught the brothers how to use the thistles. A temporary building soon rose on the banks of the Bérésina, whose purified waters now served only for work, after having rolled so many corpses in their stream, and two years later, not only were the benefits foretold by Father Arsène realized, but the manufacture of carded cloths gave the Monastery an income of six thousand roubles.

Such was the man who henceforth, clad in long trailing gowns of black serge, wearing a cylindrical cap with the top cut off and surrounded by veils made of thin black stuff, passed his life in doing good around him to persons of all ranks, high and low, and who for the moment seemed principally occupied with the pleasure of finding himself again with people who loved him.

"You had given up waiting for me," he said, with his smiling eyes glancing over the faces which surrounded him, and bore the impress of filial affection.

"You promised to come, Father Arsène," said Madame Roussof; "but you are so busy."

"There are duties of all kinds," answered the old man, with a smile full of mischievous good-nature; "the

“one which brings me among you, does not enter into our ordinary privileges.”

He looked at Mademoiselle Roussof as he was speaking; the latter became very pale and left the drawing-room, beckoning to Benjamin to follow her.

“She understood,” said Father Arsène to the astonished parents; it is a good augury for the object that brings me here; you do not guess it, my friends? Your daughter, however, knows what it is.”

Monsieur and Madame Roussof kept looking at him with bewildered eyes. He became grave.

“My young friend, Valérien Moutine, has been very much taken by your daughter Agrippine’s qualities, but he felt sure you would not consent to give your child to a man unknown to you, and who possessed no fortune; for eighteen months he has worked night and day to obtain the place of physician to the Hospital of our town, and he has at last been appointed. A good and regular practice is thus assured him, and besides, he has my friendship. In order to be more certain of his happiness, he wished to put his young wife under my protection, under my watchful care. Will you give him, through me, the hand of your daughter Agrippine?”

The parents were taken quite unawares, for they never had any suspicion of such a demand. Madame Roussof looked at her husband.

“Certainly, Father Arsène,” said she, hesitatingly. “The fact alone of having trusted this proposition to you, pleads in favor of your *protégé*.”

“It is truly the first time,” interrupted the archiman-

drite, smiling, "that I have been entrusted to negotiate a marriage, and probably will be the last."

"But this—this young man, has he spoken to our daughter? Does he know whether he has any chance of pleasing her?"

"Valérien assured me that he never broached such a subject to your child. He waited until his fate should be settled, to declare himself to her as to yourselves; then, at the last moment, his courage failed him and he delegated me."

Monsieur Roussof said nothing, but he took his wife's hand and rose.

"My dear," said he, "if you will take my advice, it would be better as Agrippine wishes. If you remember, my position when I married you, was not as assured as this young man's appears to be, and yet—if this marriage suits our daughter, let it take place; my sole desire is to see her happy."

Madame Roussof wept silently, but she made no objection.

"Call Mademoiselle," said Monsieur Roussof, putting his head into the next room.

After a moment, during which time no one had spoken, Groucha entered. Her pale face, that was paler than ever, her grey eyes darkened by her deep emotion, alone betrayed the trouble of her mind. She stood before the three arbiters of her fate.

"Groucha," said Monsieur Roussof to her, "our friend Father Arsène has come as the bearer of a proposition which concerns you. Do you wish to marry young Valérien Moutine, who has entrusted him to ask for your hand?"

Agrippine's eyes were veiled with tears for a moment, then she raised them to her father.

"It is my wish," she replied, with an assured voice, "with your blessing and my mother's."

The parents exchanged a look, and her mother turned away to hide her tears.

"You scarcely know him; do you believe you could be a good wife to him?"

"I believe so," the young girl answered with a shade of pride.

"Are you very sure of what you say?" her father persisted, alarmed at so firm a decision, which he had been far from expecting. "Then, do you love him?"

"I love him."

"May the Lord be with you then," the father sighed. "You have found your destiny; may you be happy!"

The parents blessed their child after the archimandrite, and then the young betrothed girl sat down beside them, to learn all about what concerned her, all that Valérien's messenger could tell her about the man whom she had so freely chosen.

The young physician was sent for that same day, and at night, at tea-time, Benjamin heard that his sister was going to be married. This news did not produce a very great impression on him; after he learned who was the aspirant to his sister's hand, he declared himself satisfied, and thought no more about it at the end of an hour's time.

A little before they were separating for the night, Father Arsène approached Groucha, who, calm but

more thoughtful than usual, retained her ordinary appearance.

“Do you not think, young girl,” said he with a half-smile, “that you owe me some gratitude?”

Mademoiselle Roussof’s eyes answered eloquently.

“Well, play me a little music, if you please; that will be my reward.”

The young betrothed went to the piano and played a sonata of Mozart’s. This style of music, which is calmer, less passionate than modern music, was the one she preferred when she wished to silence the throbbings of her heart. When she had finished, Father Arsène thanked her, and each retired, to think over in their own minds the impressions of this day, which had all at once assumed great and unexpected importance to them.

It was rather difficult to employ the two days that were to pass before Valérien Moutine’s arrival. A certain atmosphere of trouble weighed upon the house, not that the parents were displeased with their daughter at having decided as she had done; they had acted for themselves in nearly like manner in former times, but they were rather annoyed at not having given more attention to the young man who was going to become their son-in-law.

“It is always so,” said Monsieur Roussof to his wife, who felt this annoyance more deeply than the father. “While waiting, we must occupy ourselves with something: it rains, we cannot take walks easily, let us make Démiane come with his violin; that will be enough to interest Father Arsène all day to-morrow.”

The next day the priest's two sons were invited to breakfast. Victor's accident, which had so cruelly interfered with his projected career, immediately assured him of Father Arsène's sympathy.

"What do you think of doing in the future?" he asked the young invalid.

"What God pleases!" replied the latter, sweetly. "I am not good for much, but I can still help others."

"Do you feel no desire to enter a monastery?" asked Father Arsène, more from habit than from a desire to make a proselyte.

"No — no, your Grace, I am not made for convent life. I have often thought about it; I would rather live with my family, and when Démiane marries I will help him to bring up his children. I have a few books, I work a little from time to time. I think I shall make a suitable tutor for them."

The archimandrite approved by a movement of his head.

"And you, young man," said he to Démiane, "it is you who are going to enter the priesthood?"

Finding himself thus questioned on so delicate a subject, our friend blushed and was embarrassed. But he had already acquired enough wisdom at the Seminary to know how to find an ambiguous answer.

"I am preparing myself for it," he replied, without daring to raise his eyes.

Father Arsène knew human nature too well not to divine that there was some mystery afloat.

"Is it by your own free will?" he asked, without seeming to attach any importance to it.

Démiane remained silent.

"Eh?" said the monk, as if he had not heard the young man's answer.

Making a great effort, the young seminary student raised his eyes and replied frankly:

"No, Your Grace, it is not of my own free will."

Father Arsène looked at him attentively; the youth pleased him. In the secular clothes that young seminary students wear at home during their vacations, he had an exceptional grace and elegance, which the wretched cut of a village tailor could not entirely disguise. A black down already shadowed his upper lip, and in spite of Victor's more pensive eyes and thoughtful air, Démiane appeared the elder.

"One has always a reason for guiding his acts and thoughts," continued the monk without any severity; "what is the reason that prevents your liking the priesthood?"

"They do not wish me to play on the violin," answered Démiane, ashamed of giving so bad a reason and incapable of finding any other.

"Ah! you love the violin like that?" said Father Arsène, more and more interested in the strange fellow. "Will you play me something?"

The ladies were quite ready, and Démiane began a sonata of Beethoven's with a heart throbbing as he had never known it to throb before. It was the first time that he had an audience, for, until then the persons whom he had known from his childhood had not appeared to listen to him; and he did not pay any attention to them. A nervous tension made him frown, his black

eyes were fixed on the page of music, and with a vigor that surprised those who knew him, he attacked the piece.

He was no longer the same youth; the thought that he was playing before a judge, a judge who he felt was well disposed towards him, and who at the same time was cultivated, transformed and gave him wings. His youthful face becoming manly through the power of concentration, shone like a neophyte's, and truly, at that hour which was a solemn one to him, D miane confessed his faith.

"Why, my boy!" Monsieur Roussof said when he stopped. "I did not know you could handle a bow like that. You have worked hard since last year."

"Not at the Seminary, at all events," murmured the young man, half sadly, half smilingly.

Being questioned he was obliged to relate his misfortunes, and he did so with frankness, without hiding his innocent deceit.

Father Ars ne did his best to keep a grave demeanor, but his blue eyes twinkled, and he could not help revealing certain contractions at the corners of his lips in his white beard.

"It is very wrong," he said, however, "to deceive your superiors."

"I know it, Your Grace; but what harm can it do any one if I play the violin?"

"The rule, my son, the rule! We are not to discuss it, we submit to it through a spirit of mortification!"

D miane did not seem to care much about the spirit of mortification, and the archimandrite was convinced

that this musician would only make a very ordinary servant of the altar; but, as it was not his concern, and as he was not consulted about it, he kept his opinion to himself.

"Do you not eat fish, Father Arsène?" Madame Roussof said to him during dinner.

"No, I thank you."

"It is not, however, a day of fasting and abstinence," the physician insisted. "Why do you refuse what is permitted?"

"It is an idea of mine," replied the monk smiling. "I have a little system of my own, and to-day, if you will be so kind, you will let me dine on bread and vegetables. But do not let it disturb you; imagine I have eaten of everything even to committing a sin of gluttony."

He smiled with so calm an air, and his eyes expressed so much kindness that his wish was respected. After the repast was over, he took Démiane by the ear and led him to the piano.

"Begin your sonata again, my dear friend," said he to him, "and play it as well as you can."

Groucha, who was turning over the music book, looked at the monk attentively, and, without raising her voice she said to him respectfully:

"It was in order to have some music that you deprived yourself of fish, Father Arsène?"

"Don't say a word, mademoiselle," he answered, smiling; "do not try to penetrate into anybody's conscience."

She threw him a glance full of feeling. The thought that this old man had fasted in order to give himself an

artistic pleasure without any remorse, compensating thus by a privation for the element of pleasure that entered into his life that day, inspired her with greater veneration for Valérien's friend. She played for him as she had never played for any one, and these two young musicians gave Father Arsène a concert almost equal to that of a master.

After the *adagio*, he arose and motioned with his hand.

"Enough," said he; "I thank you."

"The end of the sonata!" cried Monsieur Roussof in an imploring tone; "listen to the end of it!"

"No, one must not be a *gourmand*," replied the old man gently.

Then he added, regretfully:

"It would give me too much pleasure; let us be reasonable."

CHAPTER VIII.

CLASSICAL MUSIC.

THE next evening Valérien arrived. To say that he was received with open arms would be too bold a metaphor, but Monsieur and Madame Roussof managed nevertheless to show him the necessary cordiality. From the beginning of the very next morning they were won by the affectionate deference shown them by their future son-in-law, by the simple dignity of his bearing toward his affianced bride, and by the filial affection for the archimandrite which his smallest act revealed. After a trial of two days, Groucha's father and mother agreed that none of the young men who had been considered up to that time as possible suitors for their daughter's hand, had united so many qualities; they had still however to become reconciled to his modest position. On this point Monsieur Roussof was more indulgent than his wife.

"That is a matter of no consequence whatever," said he, "so long as one has a little more than what is necessary. When once one is sure of wanting for nothing, luxury is a thing that one can very well do without, particularly when it is a habit acquired early in life. Groucha has never known what is called luxury; she will find in her husband's house pretty much what she has had here; I would not think of pitying her for not possessing more."

The marriage was fixed for the 8th of September ; it was near the time of Benjamin's re-entering the Gymnasium in Moscow to continue his studies, and the interval allowed for the completion of Mademoiselle Roussof's trousseau ; the coming event was made known to relatives, friends and neighbors.

The news did not surprise Victor very much ; in the "far away" thoughts of the young girl he had fancied he divined something beside clouds driven by the wind-storm ; what troubled him was not the marriage itself, but the separation which would be its consequence. It was in vain that he said to himself that every year when the Autumn came, Groucha carried away his sunshine and his joy, and that this year it would not be otherwise, and the idea of seeing her the following year for a few weeks, perhaps for a few days only, seemed to him extremely bitter. He did not account for the feelings with which the future husband inspired him, but most certainly he did not care to see him near the young girl ; and yet the poor boy was not jealous ; because he realized so thoroughly the abyss which separated him from Valérien, but he suffered at the thought that this happy man would be everything to Groucha, while he poor wretch, would be no longer anything to her.

As the archimandrite could not long remain away from the monastery, Madame Roussof resolved on giving him, once more before his departure, the pleasure of a little good music. Taking advantage of his drives with her husband, she made Démiane practice another classical piece, and one evening, after dinner, she offered it to Father Arsène as a surprise.

The latter listened in silence, as he always did, with his eyes fixed on the instrument, and apparently thinking only of his musical enjoyment. When the piece was finished, he smiled benevolently.

“Very well, very well,” said he in his gentle voice, weakened by age and fasting, “I thank you, my children. Come here, young man, and tell me if you think one can be happier elsewhere than beneath the shadow of the sanctuary, or in serving another master than the Lord?”

All eyes were turned toward Démiane, who wished himself on the other side of the wall, in the garden, in the wood, anywhere. An answer had to be given however, and the young musician decided to speak, at the risk of drawing down on himself a reprimand.

“I do not think,” said he, “that to gain one’s living honestly, fearing God and serving Him in the measure of one’s strength, can be less agreeable to the Lord, than to see an ill-disposed servant in His sanctuary, regretting what he can never obtain.”

Monsieur Rousof looked at Démiane with astonishment. Such an answer must have been long thought of and pondered. Decidedly the boy was very clever, and the physician showed his approbation of the speech by a little nod of the head.

“That is true, very true,” said Father Arsène, no less surprised. “And your father wishes you to be a priest.”

“Yes.”

“Have you told him that your wishes are opposed to his?”

"I have not dared to do so."

The archimandrite reflected for a moment, then addressing himself in a low tone to Madame Roussof, he begged her to send for Father Kouzma.

Démiane overheard, and gently drawing near the monk he furtively kissed the sleeve of his habit.

"You think at the very least," said Father Arsène, pinching his ear, "that I am going to tell your father not to send you back to the Seminary?"

"A wish from you would be an order for him!" replied Démiane, with downcast eyes and his breast rising and falling in the excess of emotion.

"That is a mistake," said the monk, sighing; "we of the *black* clergy have no authority over the priests, who are the *white* clergy: the bishops, it is true, are taken from our ranks, and they can command the priests; but those who like me live in monasteries have no influence, unless they are ambitious."

"And you are not ambitious, Father Arsène?" asked Monsieur Roussof, smiling.

"Ah! Heavens! no. I was so formerly, when I wore a uniform. You see what epaulettes I obtained!" answered the monk, pointing to the folds of the black veil which floated over his shoulders.

Father Kouzma now entered. His character had become embittered since the misfortune which had fallen on Victor, and he avoided the Roussof's house, which, moreover, he had never frequented very much. Russian priests fully realize that they are only held in esteem on account of their sacred character, and then only when they are arrayed in their stole. This con-

tempt for the poorly instructed man, of common manners, forms a striking contrast to the veneration which the minister of God inspires, and is one of the characteristic marks of Russian society. When in church, the priest holds out the crucifix to the people — the greatest lady, in order to set an example to the peasants, will kiss respectfully the hand of the officiating clergyman who holds the cross, and for nothing in the world, an hour after, would she give her hand in the English fashion to the same man who will bow before her with a respect sometimes somewhat servile.

The young men were sent away : the archimandrite then had a long conversation with his hosts and the Priest ; the latter was stubborn, as are all men who keep their ideas for themselves alone, and it was impossible to make him hear reason.

“It is the finger of God which has marked Démiane for the priesthood,” he repeated, without listening to the slightest objection ; “the day of the accident I was asking myself what could be done with the boy, and the answer from Heaven came immediately ; at the same moment Victor was brought back to me in the state you know of. How can the will of Providence be disregarded in this ? ”

When men make use of the decrees of Providence as a reason for carrying out their own caprices, it is quite useless to contend with them ; the battle is lost beforehand, and the three friends of the young violinist were obliged to renounce their plan.

“It must be as you please, Father Kouzma,” said Monsieur Roussof finally ; “you are the master, and if

the Father Archimandrite, your Superior in orders, although officially he has no power over you, cannot bring you to his way of thinking, it would be useless for me to give my opinion afterward. But if any misfortune arises out of all this, if some day your son refuses to obey you, in spite of my respect for your character, in spite of the friendship which for twenty years I have borne the officiating priest of this parish, I warn you that I shall be on D  miane's side and not on yours."

Father Kouzma rose without saying a word, bowed respectfully to the assembled company and was about to take leave, when a gesture of the archimandrite detained him.

"Monsieur Roussof has spoken to you with frankness, with too much frankness, perhaps," said he; "it does not become us to judge between father and son; but I assure you that you wrong your child less in obliging him to follow a career for which he feels no fitness, than by preventing him from giving himself to music, for which Providence has so visibly qualified him."

"He was appointed by the will of the Lord," replied the Priest coldly. "I am the most humble servant of Your Grace and of Your Lordship."

He retired majestically, followed, as soon as the door was shut on him, by an exclamation that Monsieur Roussof, out of deference to the archimandrite, changed into:

"Stubborn old man!"

"We will help the young fellow to the liberty they refuse him, will we not, Father Ars  ne?"

"Hush!" said the latter, putting his finger on his lips. "We must not foment rebellion in the son against the father; it is a grievous sin, and contrary to the fourth commandment."

"Without doubt," replied the physician, perfectly serious; "but the standard of revolt once raised, I am capable of helping the cause; Father Archimandrite, you cannot excommunicate me for this deed, for, after all, it is a personal matter, and I am not the son of Father Kouzma."

The good monk could not help smiling, but he made a gesture of reproach; nevertheless Monsieur Roussol remained persuaded that for the future Démiane had two allies.

CHAPTER IX.

A PROTECTOR FOR DÉMIANE.

IF Démiane did not have his ears pulled that day, it was because when he went home with Victor everybody had been in bed for a long time. The music had lasted until very late, and every one had seemed to enjoy it so much, that, rather than disturb the festivities by retiring, Father Arsène had preferred imposing on himself two days of secret abstinence to compensate for this excess of worldly pleasure. But the next morning at dawn of day the young man received a sound lecture.

"If I did not think that it would bring me annoyances," concluded Father Kouzma, after a discourse in which he had given proof of unusual eloquence, "I would forbid you to return to the manor, and I would light the fire with your ill-fated violin! But it is I again who would be in the wrong, and I do not wish to have any reproaches on your account. You will return to the Seminary after the vacation, your violin will disappear forever, and next year there will be no question concerning it."

Démiane, quivering, listened to his sentence without saying a word; he knew that it was useless discussing with his father; as much firmness as the latter lacked in the ordinary acts of his life, so much obstinacy did he show when he had decided on anything, taking

stubbornness then for strength. When Father Kouzma had finished his discourse, his son left him with the outward forms of respect, and with the implacable resolution of never re-entering the Seminary.

Instead of taking Victor for confidant, as would have seemed natural, he slipped round mysteriously to Monsieur Roussof on the following Saturday, while his father was celebrating the evening service. The only people who generally attend this service are those attached to the church, and a few idlers, who are both aged and infirm, and who have nothing to do on that day, and such are rare in civilized countries. The Lord in ordaining Sunday as a day of rest, provided every one with plenty of work for Saturday night. Madame Roussof, like a good housekeeper, was devoting herself to mysterious work in the depths of cupboards and closets in the pantry and in the linen-room; Benjamin was making a kite, which somehow always refused to fly, and the young man found the physician in his study; he alone did not seem to suspect that it was Saturday evening, and that he ought to apply himself to some unusual duties.

"Is that you, Démiane?" said Monsieur Roussof. "Were you well scolded the other day?"

"Yes, sir," answered the young musician.

"Your father has forbidden you to play the violin?"

"Not during this summer; but after you leave, there will be an end of it, I shall never see my instrument again."

Monsieur Roussof played nervously with the paper-knife that was near his hand, and answered without looking at him:

“Well, very well.”

He then became silent, and remained so, so long that at last they both raised their heads simultaneously and looked at each other.

“Does that please you?” asked the physician, who read something unusual in the youth’s eyes.

“No, sir, it does not please me.”

“What do you want to do then?”

“I want to ask you, what I can do, how I can gain my living, in order to continue studying music, for I have no intention of returning to the Seminary.”

“Ah!” said the physician with a sigh, which might pass for one of relief, “and you have announced your intention to your father?”

“No, sir, and I do not wish to speak of it to him; it is not worth while.”

“Very well! And you have come to ask me to help you to disobey your father and to take flight!”

“Yes, sir. It is you who taught me music, it is you who gave me my violin, and I do not suppose that you will forsake me in a moment of trial.”

“Capital! and your father, what will he say when you are gone?”

“He will be very much displeased, I know, but what would you have me do?”

“I! Nothing at all, my boy! And if he blames me?”

“You will be in Moscow, Monsieur Roussouf, and as for that, there is no need for you to say that you have helped me.”

“That’s true, a benefactor should be modest; that is only too true. And you have arranged all that?”

"I thought that you had some affection for me, sir, and that you took an interest in my music."

"Better and better. And your brother, what does he say to these fine projects?"

"He says that you will help me to find a place where I can gain my living, until I can make money by my violin."

Monsieur Roussof put down his paper-knife, leaned back in his arm-chair and smiled to himself. This was entirely what he had foreseen, only he had not hoped to find so much resolution and simple dignity in the young boy. He expected that Démiane would ask him for the means of living and not for the means of earning his own bread.

"Very well, my friend," said he in quite a different tone of voice from that which he had used before, "you can rely on me. As you say, it was I who taught you to love music; for the time being, it is a poor service that I have rendered you, as it places you in opposition to your father; but later, it may perhaps prove an advantage. I hope that then you will remember it, as you have done to-day. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, Sir, answered Démiane," overcome with joy.

"Well, now you must do as if I had said nothing to you; do not worry yourself, try not to irritate your father unnecessarily, and when the time has arrived, we will have another conversation together. Until then, it is useless for us to speak again of your projects."

Démiane remained motionless. The word *thanks* seemed to him very common-place, and he wished to

express his gratitude at any price. While the physician was looking at him, astonished at his silence and composure, the young man suddenly caught sight of a photograph on the table of Groucha and her brother when children, holding each other's hands. He took it, kissed it twice passionately, then replaced it saying:

“I thank you, sir! Good night!”

He went out, and Monsieur Roussof, tête-à-tête with his new decision, even while saying to himself that he had just taken a great burden on himself, could not help thinking that Démiane had no ordinary mind. But in order not to be interfered with, he spoke of what had passed only to his wife, and no one about them had the least suspicion of the young man's plan.

CHAPTER X.

A CALLING.

SEPTEMBER arrived very early that year, much sooner than on the preceding years, and it took everyone in Gradovka by surprise. The re-opening of the schools, the marriage of Groucha, the supposed departure of Démiane for the Seminary, all fell at once on the heads of the different people interested therein, and Valérien Moutine was probably the only one who did not think that the marriage day had come too soon.

The wedding took place very quietly; it was the virtuous marriage of people who love one another, and who contrary to the received customs in such cases seemed to feel no need of inspiring those around them with feelings of ill-will. The bride looked very well, the bridegroom sufficiently pale; Madame Roussof did not have a new dress for the occasion, a fact which provoked some few criticisms among her country neighbors; Father Kouzma delivered a very correct address which he found in the collection of sermons, and which had only been made use of twice during forty years, because it was applicable to the nobles and not to the peasants. The banquet was very grand. There were fifty-two people at one large table and no small table, which saved the pride of every one. All retired satisfied, a state of mind which had perhaps never been

known before in Europe, and certainly never in the "government."

Two days after the marriage Valérien took his wife away, and then, without any one's knowing why, Gradovka became silent and empty. Yet Groucha did not talk much, and moved about still less; but her presence was the charm of the house, and every one became aware of it as soon as she departed.

Victor took the announcement of his friend's marriage very philosophically; moreover this marriage did not materially change his relations with her; if she had remained there with her husband, he would probably have transferred to the young man a part of the affection which he felt for her, and he would have included them both in his devotion. No thought of jealousy could enter Victor's mind. What was he, poor sickly creature, cut off from the number, not of the living, but of those who love, who hope, who succeed, in comparison with Mademoiselle Roussof, now Madame Moutine.

But when she was gone, the poor boy felt an intolerable ennui. Mechanically he turned his steps to the garden hedge, from which he had been in the habit of watching her coming and going, and taking care of the flowers and plants with a solicitude which the gardener found alarming to his peace of mind. But it was all in vain! the flowers could now stretch out their stalks in every direction for sun or water, since no one now took care of them! Every hour, twenty times a day, he would say to himself: Mademoiselle Roussof must be playing the piano, reading at the window, or working in the garden—he would listen, turning his head in the

accustomed direction — but he neither heard nor saw anything which could be even a semblance of his absent friend.

“You are bored, are you not?” said his brother one day when he saw him returning with drooping head from one of these pilgrimages to the hedge.

Victor caught in the act, blushed and tried to excuse the insurmountable ennui which could be read on his face.

“Do not excuse yourself,” answered Démiane, “it is quite natural, and Mademoiselle Roussof was more your friend than mine; I was of too little consequence, and yet since she has gone, I see how much the house is changed. True, Madame Roussof plays a little music with me, but she has no longer heart for anything, and it is not at all the same.”

The two brothers were walking slowly beside the pond. Démiane seized Victor’s arm:

“Listen,” said he in a low voice, “do you remember that on this very spot I told you that I would not return to the Seminary?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I will not return to it. Monsieur Roussof has promised to find me some means of earning my living.—Will you come with me?”

“Démiane, you are losing your senses! You are going away in a week!”

“Precisely; but I shall not go to the Seminary, I shall go to Moscow; come with me, we will work together, we shall earn enough to eat dry bread, and we shall be as free as air!”

"I do not know how to do anything!" murmured Victor, piteously.

"You know enough Slavonian, Latin, and Sacred History to give lessons to little children, at any rate!"

"They would laugh at me —"

"I should like to see that!" cried Démiane, his eyes flashing with anger and tossing his vigorous arms above his head. "I should like to see the little wretches laugh at my good Victor, because he fell from a tree."

Full of energy and valor, he looked as if he were preparing to fight with the future pupils of his brother; the latter cooled his ardor by a very simple question:

"Has our father given you permission to go to Moscow?"

Démiane's fire was quenched, and in a perfectly calm tone of voice he answered:

"I have not spoken to him about it."

Victor sighed; it was a habit which he had taken from his father.

"But," continued Démiane, "I am perfectly sure he would refuse."

"Well, then?"

"In that case, I shall go without his permission."

Victor raised his hands to Heaven, but Heaven must be accustomed to this gesture, for it does not pay much attention to it.

"And you will come with me?"

"My dear Démiane, do not ask that of me! I cannot disobey our father, nor be in disgrace. As for you, you have for excuse your thwarted love of music, but I ——"

"You will have for excuse your friendship for me and the isolation into which I am going to be plunged. Only think, Victor, all alone in that great Moscow, where I know no one. I shall be very sad and forsaken! If you come, we two will form a little family, and from time to time we can go and see Monsieur Roussof; they will perhaps invite us to dine on Sundays, and then you know that Madame Moutine has promised to pass the Christmas fêtes with her parents. Then we shall have fine music."

Victor liked music very well, but he liked Madame Moutine still better, and his brother's argument left him without defence, nevertheless his good sense inspired him with one objection.

"Without doubt," said he, "but if our father is angry with us, we shall not be able to come back here next summer, and for having had music during a week at Christmas with Mademoiselle Roussof—with Madame Moutine, I mean—we shall be deprived of our vacation during the whole summer."

"Bah!" said Démiane, with that Russian wave of the hand which can be construed to mean come what will! "The summer is so far off! whereas, I would have to go to the Seminary in a week's time. You will not come?"

"I cannot, Démiane!" replied the poor boy, ready to burst into tears.

"As you please," answered his brother, coldly, and he turned his back on him. This was a manner of acting which Victor was incapable of resisting; he ran after Démiane and put his hand on his arm with a tenderness that would have melted a rock.

"And if our father curses us, my brother," said he, so moved that he could hardly speak.

"You are afraid of sharing my lot, you wish to remain at home, loved and petted, while I, disgraced and disinherited, go to seek my fortune all alone. You do well, and your choice is the wisest; therefore, I do not blame you," answered Démiane, carelessly.

"Our father would be so grieved!" exclaimed Victor, heavy-hearted.

"And I, do you not think that it is a grief to me to be made to follow a career which is distasteful to me, to be deprived of my violin which is as necessary to me as bread and salt? Do you imagine that it is for my pleasure that I am going to live as poor as Job for several years, instead of peaceably growing fat in the Seminary where really one at first is very well fed and well treated, and where one has not much to do; and afterwards, in a pretty parsonage, with my family around me? If you imagine that it is from idleness or selfishness that I prefer leaving my family, ruining my future and grieving my father, you are mistaken, Victor."

"But what is it then?" asked the cripple, astonished by this vehemence.

"Brother," replied Démiane, gravely, "I think it is what is termed a calling."

Victor was silent. Calling, for him, was a word to be applied solely to things religious, and he did not quite understand its meaning applied to a profane art like music. His brother perceived this.

"You know," he continued with the same seriousness

which contrasted so strangely with the vehement tone and childish violence of his preceding words, "you have learned how the martyrs suffered themselves to be torn to pieces by the wild beasts for their faith, how the missionaries went forth into wild countries to convert the heathen; why did they do it? Because they were urged forward by a power over which they had no control; they preferred to be devoured by the lions and slain by the savages to living quietly and doing only what was easy and agreeable. That is what is termed a calling. Well, I—I would rather live miserably for ten years, yes, Victor, for ten years, hardly earning my bread, wearing thread-bare clothes, and not daring to go to any one's house, because I shall be too poor; I had rather, if needs be, suffer the pangs of hunger and die on my violin, than be a priest and renounce music."

His face was transfigured while he was thus speaking; his pale lips made the down which overshadowed them seem blacker, and his eyes flashed; he had drawn himself up and his slender figure towered a whole head above his brother's bent body. The latter looked at him with timid admiration, then with touching submission, and with infinite tenderness in his voice, he said to him, gently:

"My brother, I believe you; since it is to share your misery and your sufferings, I will do as you wish."

Démiane pressed him warmly to his broad chest without saying a word, then they turned homeward.

CHAPTER XI.

A RUNAWAY.

PARACHA was packing her brother's trunk as he was to leave the next day, and while piling up the shirts and stockings, the practical reflection occurred to her mind that this trunk was altogether too large. It should have been left for her, for women's clothes take up much more room than those of men, every one knows; what was the use of this large trunk, in which everything would be tossed about?

"It is one of Démiane's notions to have asked mamma for this one, who does not know how to refuse him anything! He pretends that it will be more convenient for him to sit upon. What an idea?"

She shrugged her shoulders, and in order to protest against the size of the trunk, she leaned with all her might on the stockings and shirts, in order to make them fit into the little corners. Paracha was rather out of sorts with everybody and everything. Why did she have brothers? If she had been the only child, no fate could have been happier than hers. Her two brothers in coming after her, had literally cut away the ground from beneath her feet.

And then their house was such a dull one! Her father never had time to pay any attention to her. Would he not do better to seek a husband for her, than

to scold Démiane the whole day long. To scold Démiane had, indeed, become for Father Kouzma a regular occupation, a sort of daily duty which he performed with extraordinary bitterness, and he reproached himself with not having done it sooner, and endeavored by the number of his present lectures to make amends for the negligence of past times. His son received these lectures with a submission which nevertheless somewhat surprised Father Kouzma, accustomed as he was to rebellions which never exposed themselves, but were easy to be guessed. In former days Démiane would listen with drooping head and crimson cheeks, and the hands which hung open at his sides would quiver with impatience; the lecture ended, he would bow to his father, kiss his hand hastily, and go off as quickly as possible. Now he would listen to these interminable reprimands with immovable patience, sometimes lifting his eyes to the preacher with a novel expression of gentleness and interest; he seemed to be trying to draw the greatest possible profit from these reproaches mingled with advice, the whole enforced by threats, so much so, that more than once his father asked him if he understood him clearly.

The fact is that Démiane, having made up his mind to leave the paternal roof and to escape from the fate which they had prepared for him, by one of those changes natural enough in a character like his, wished to leave a pleasant memory behind him and to carry away as many good counsels and good thoughts as he could. His mischievous spirits were quieted, and for more than a month neither his mother nor the maid-servant were

obliged to reproach him with any escapade in the private domains of the household; he was respectful to his parents, affectionate to the poor and lowly of the village, as if he desired to make himself regretted, and that was indeed what he wished, counting on the indulgence which the recollection of these last days would call forth on his behalf. He was even smiling and amiable with his sister, although this was certainly the most difficult part of his self-imposed task.

Another trial which cost him a constant effort over himself was Victor's despondent manner; often he would repeat to him that his tearful appearance would betray their secret; the poor boy was incapable of controlling himself. The thought of leaving perhaps forever, so dear a home, and such good parents, would bring tears to his eyes and overwhelm his mind with sorrow. If any one had the least suspicion of the young men's project Victor would have betrayed it to him a hundred times a day. Happily no one thought of such a thing.

While Paracha was bestowing her regrets on the too large trunk which might have been put to a better use, Démiane went to Monsieur Roussof to bid him good-bye. In reality, although he had prepared everything for his flight, it was absolutely impossible for him to effect it, seeing that he and his brother between them could not raise two roubles. In spite of his confidence in the physician's promise, Démiane was very much agitated when he entered his study.

"Good morning," said Monsieur Roussof, who was reading the newspaper, "you have come to bid me good-bye."

"Yes, sir," answered the young man boldly, encouraged by the tone, not by the words.

"You are going to-morrow to the Seminary?"

"Unless you decide otherwise, sir."

The physician began to laugh. This way of reminding him of his engagements was very much to his taste.

"You never asked me if I remembered our conversation?" said he in a tone of interrogation.

"Of what use would it have been, sir? If you remembered it, there was no need of speaking of it; if you had forgotten it, of what use would it be to remind you of a thing which had not been sufficiently interesting to engrave itself on your memory?"

"Zounds! what argumentative powers! It seems to me that you would have made progress at the Seminary! What if we sent you back there?"

"It shall be as you say, sir, it depends entirely on you," answered Démiane resignedly.

"Well, I have decided that you are to give four lessons a week in Moscow, at the house of one of my friends who wishes his two sons to learn to play the violin; you will not be paid very much, you will have fifteen roubles a month for the four lessons; that is not brilliant, but small streams make large rivers. Besides this you will help Benjamin to prepare his tasks for the Gymnasium, for you know he is as lazy as a dormouse; that will take you four or five evenings a week, and I will also give you fifteen roubles, which will make thirty. Do you think that you can live on a rouble a day?"

"I do not know, sir; I think that I can, for I am determined to bear everything. I thank you with all my heart for your kindness; but the duty of making Benjamin prepare his lessons, will answer much better for Victor than for me, and I beg that you will reserve it for him. I will look out for something else."

"Victor!" cried Monsieur Roussof; "what, have you enticed Victor to go away also?"

"Yes, sir," answered Démiane, with a slight smile of triumph.

"Then you are without a home, now; as if it were not enough for one of you! But we only agreed on one! And then your father, what will he say?"

"You will tell him, sir, when we have gone, that I have taken Victor as a safe-guard. Victor is so good, so gentle, so pure, so noble-minded, so wedded to his duties, that as long as he is with me, no misfortune can happen to me. Victor will give me good advice, he is economical, handy —"

"He will make an excellent housekeeper, I do not doubt," concluded Monsieur Roussof. "After all, it is a good idea; but the blow will be a hard one for Father Kouzma!"

"You will soften it to him, sir," said Démiane gently. "It is you who will let him know that I could not resist an imperative call —"

"And it is I who am charged with the errand into the bargain? Tell me, my boy, you are laughing at me, are you not?"

"If you do not do it, sir, whom would you have do it? It is so natural that it should be you, that if you

refuse, he will see immediately that you have helped me."

"Heavens! how acute you are!" exclaimed Monsieur Roussof, surprised by this good sense. "You two together are going to rouse the world!"

"I hope so!" answered the proud smile of the young man, but his lips remained mute.

"That changes my plans," resumed the physician. "I put twenty-five roubles into this envelope, to take you to Moscow, and to help you to start fair; you must have fifty—here they are; but be economical, both of you, for I am not rich."

"It is a loan, sir," answered Démiane proudly. "I thank you for being kind enough to be the creditor of a poor devil like myself, but I will repay you as soon as possible."

"So be it, my friend, it is a loan if you prefer it, I have no objection, although that was not my intention; I suppose however you are not going to offer me a promissory note."

"No, sir, my word is as good as my bond."

"Come; that's all right. What a queer boy you are! And your violin, how are you going to carry it away?"

"That's Victor's affair. He has promised me to stow it away somewhere."

"He is commencing to play his part of housekeeper? You lose no time, I see. And how are you going to carry him off?"

"He has asked permission to take me to the Post Station. Instead of coming back with our horse, he will continue on the road with me. The peasant who

brings back the telega, will bring you a note from me announcing our departure."

"You make me think of Augustus before the battle of Actium! I admire you! In a week, we shall all be together in Moscow. Go and take leave of Benjamin, and do not tell him that Victor is to make him work this winter; he is incapable of keeping a secret for more than five minutes. I am delighted that it will be Victor; you would have made but a sorry tutor, whereas Victor has that gift,—the gift of patience above all. *Au revoir*, my friend, and a pleasant journey to you."

When Paracha, who left the trunk to go and take a cup, or rather several cups of tea, came back to give it a last look, she was surprised to find that it seemed to have become singularly smaller in the inside. The things were just where she placed them, but they now filled the space which before had been left empty between their level and the lid of the trunk. Victor, who was standing leaning against the window, was looking at it with an air of indifference.

"What have you crammed in there?" asked Paracha, indignant at the thought that her handiwork was tampered with.

"Manuscripts of Sacred History which I have loaned to Démiane, all my old Seminary exercises; there was a whole pile, and I have put them underneath, not to disturb your nice arrangement."

"You do very wrong to encourage him in his idleness," grumbled Paracha. "He'll never die of overwork. You have nothing else to put in? That's fortunate, at any rate."

In her ill humor, she shut the trunk energetically, making the lock jingle, for all the locks of trunks belonging to the lower classes are musical, and the more sonorous they are, the more they cost; then she gave the key to Victor.

“There, give it to that good-for-nothing, I have something else to do than to busy myself about his clothes all day long!”

And she went on her way to more agreeable duties, because they were devoted to the embellishment of her own person.

The following day, near twelve o'clock, after a quick repast, Démiane drew near to Father Kouzma to ask for his blessing. The telega was before the door, and harnessed to it was the horse which served the priest for farming purposes, and another hired for the occasion; the proprietor of the latter was to act as coachman until they reached the Post Station, where the stage-coach passed which took them to the Seminary. Father Kouzma had no intention of scolding his son on that day, having complied with that duty the previous evening in such a way as to be able to rest for some time. He blessed his child and embraced him with more than usual tenderness. The excellent behavior of the young man during these last days had softened his heart towards him. Démiane was very pale; this unwonted gentleness inspired him with an emotion that he had much difficulty in mastering; he did not dare to look either at his mother or at Victor, and his project came near ending in smoke, for he was perhaps about to confess all and beg pardon, when his

father, considering that he had forgotten a part of his duty, said in a severe tone :

“And above all, no more music.”

“Good-bye, father; good-bye, mother;” answered Démiane in a voice that had become firm again. “You are coming with me, Victor?”

Victor advanced to his father, to receive his blessing also. The priest, somewhat surprised, seemed to ask him the meaning of this pious zeal.

“Me, as well as Démiane, my father,” said the poor boy, ashamed of his deceit, and more unhappy than if he were the greatest criminal.

“So be it,” said Father Kouzma, blessing his eldest son. “Do not be belated, the night comes so quickly.”

“Good-bye,” repeated both sons, already on the threshold of the door.

They got into the telega, the peasant whipped his horse, they passed the gate at the entrance to the village, waved their hands for the last time to the grey houses, and then looked at one another, hardly daring to believe in the success of their enterprise.

“Oh!” exclaimed Victor, regretfully, “I have forgotten something.”

“What?” asked his brother anxiously, “the violin?”

“No, it is in the trunk, and we are sitting on it. I forgot to bid Paracha good-bye.”

“Oh, well! there is no great harm done,” said Démiane, laughing. “And then, it is a good sign when one forgets something. It is a sign that one will return.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE MONASTERY.

THE next morning, the diligence deposited in the dust of M —, the two young travellers, who were worn out with fatigue and consumed with anxiety. Should they think of coming after them, what would become of these flown birds? It was with the manner of conspirators that they left the post-station — while their travelling companions were taking a detestable repast — and they set out for the Monastery.

“And suppose the Father archimandrite turns us away from the door?” said Victor, who was always inclined to look at the dark side of things.

“We will go away,” replied Démiane.

He was the one who had acquired Groucha’s optimism, while his brother became more and more alarmed.

Démiane’s legs took more rapid strides than Victor’s. He perceived it and slackened his gait, passing his brother’s arm in his own.

“See,” said he, “the weather is fine, the sunshine accompanies us; my heart is full of song! All the tunes of my violin are dancing in my head!”

They soon reached the Monastery and were received in the pilgrim’s house by a lay brother, with a welcoming face. Every Monastery possesses its pilgrim’s house, which is situated at one of the angles of the quadrilateral formed by the convent grounds. Those

who stop in the town and cannot pay to go to an inn, and the sick and the weary, are welcomed there, provided they have an honest appearance, and, according to their social position, they obtain a place in the dormitory on a pine board, or are given a room to themselves, in accordance with the steward's orders. Those who have nothing to eat are fed by the monks; the others take their meals as they choose, either sending for them from without, or else preparing them themselves. The sick apply to the pharmacy of the Monastery, and are most generally cured in a few days, their chief ailment being fatigue.

Démiane wrote on a small piece of paper: "Démiane Markof, an humble sinner, presents himself to the Father archimandrite to ask for his blessing," and sent it to be taken to the interior of the convent. Five minutes afterwards, the brother reappeared, laughing in spite of himself, doubtless at something he had just heard.

"This way, my young gentleman," said he, opening a door that led into the garden. "You will find the Father archimandrite at the end of the walk."

Reassured by this jovial reception, which seemed a good augury for him, Démiane dragged Victor under the birch trees, which were already shorn of their leaves and which formed a long avenue leading to the church, and to a semi-circular terrace that overlooked the whole valley of the Bérésina, where, in truth, they found Father Arsène.

Démiane approached slowly; at the sight of his judge, all his assurance forsook him; not that the old

man looked cross, but his light-blue eyes seemed to penetrate so far into the young musician's conscience, that he felt himself in fault and realized for the first time the responsibility he had undertaken in bringing his brother with him.

He wished to kiss the monk's hand and to receive his blessing, but the latter raising it kept him at a distance, and the questioning, so much dreaded by Victor, began with some solemnity :

"Whence do you come, young man?"

"From my father's house, Your Grace."

"Where are you going?"

"To Moscow."

"With Father Kouzma's permission?"

"Without it, Your Grace."

"Does Monsieur Roussof know it?"

"He does, Your Grace; he told me to present his compliments to you, and to tell his daughter as well as his son-in-law all the news."

Father Arsène thought to himself, that Démiane had an extraordinary assurance for his age and that he would get on very well, without any one to watch over him.

"Is that your brother?" said he, pointing to Victor; "I think I saw him at Gradovka."

"Yes, Your Grace."

"What is he doing with you?"

"I begged him to come with me, that I might not be alone in my life. Victor is much better and much wiser than I; his advice will be useful and beneficial to me."

"Hem! it does not appear to me that his advice has so much influence over you," said the monk, seriously, "for I do not suppose it was he who advised you to leave, or who begged you to bring him with you."

Démiane lowered his head, and Victor, thinking him vanquished, took up his defence.

"Excuse him, Your Grace," said he, in a trembling voice, "the poor fellow was so unhappy at being forbidden to play music! He could not resist. We love each other so dearly, Your Grace."

The sound of his troubled voice had something touching in it that went to the old monk's heart. He could well remember his youth, and the storms that despotic domineering engenders in the heart, and he felt pity for our friends.

"I will speak to your father," said he; "but on condition that you will not continue your rebellion any longer. You must write him that you are ashamed of your error, that you hope for his pardon, and that you will submit yourselves humbly to his commands."

"But he will exact that we return to him!" observed Démiane.

The archimandrite concealed a smile.

"It is too late to return to the Seminary," he said, "you are justly expelled from this hour."

Démiane nearly jumped with joy; his brother perceived the impulse and seized him by the arm; he restrained himself, but his eyes expressed so much delight that Father Arsène could no longer contain himself.

"Little thief," said he, taking him by his ear, "at least you will become a great artist?"

With a passionate gesture Démaine seized the monk's hand, and kissed it twice with earnestness.

"That's all very well, that's all very well," said the Priest, withdrawing his hand; "you are a great sinner, and your mentor there is not worth any more than yourself. The fine wisdom you two have! On what are you going to live, foolish fellows that you are, what are you going to eat?"

"Probably the bread of misery," hazarded Démiane, who allowed himself to make two or three gambols, which were moderated however on account of the holiness of the place where they were, the peristyle of a church, and which was consecrated moreover, as was all the ground occupied by the convent. "But if you only knew, Father Arsène, how indifferent we are to all that! Do you wish me to play you a little music?"

"You wish to pay me in your worthless money, bad fellow!" said the monk, who was rejuvenated by this youthfulness, this exuberance which recalled to him the remote time, when a simple naval cadet, he climbed the ropes of his fine man-of-war. "Well, so be it, go to Madame Moutine, and tell her I will see her at four o'clock, and let her have her piano ready."

Madame Moutine was always ready, and her piano also. She received with kindness the fugitives whose visit her father had announced to her, and Victor was able to assure himself that she was happy. Her great calmness was always the same, but a look of repose and contentment had replaced the melancholy one of her

past days. The poor boy felt a real joy at the sight of her happiness, and his unselfish affection carried away with it something with which to gladden him during the cold days of winter solitude which they were about to pass in poverty.

After one or two sonatas, Father Arsène was content; and he invited the young men to be present at the evening service, "in a spirit of penance," he said; in reality, he wished to know what Démiane would say about his choristers, whom he had instructed with most particular care.

The night having come, they went to the Convent Church. Above a door which led into the interminable birch-tree walk, the monk made the young men observe a picture in fresco. It was what is commonly called, Saint Veronica's Veil; the face of Christ on a cloth that is suspended from its two upper corners. A lamp burned night and day before the holy picture and permitted one to see it distinctly.

"Look," said he, "if that is not a veritable wonder: when the French bombarded the Monastery, in 1812, their iron shells struck this door on the right, on the left, above and below the face of Christ; the cloth is full of holes, the projectiles remain in the wall, only the Divine Face was spared."

Démiane looked at the picture with curiosity, while Victor said a prayer before it.

"Who painted that?" he asked.

"It was a man who happened to be here at the time of the bombardment; he had just finished his work, the paint was not yet dry, so they have told me. He was

afraid his work would be destroyed; he had not sufficient faith. He painted other things in the convent; all the frescoes are by him; and then on the top of the house I live in, there is a pavilion, in which he painted some very curious things—he was a man after your style,” added he, addressing Démiane; “he believed in nothing but painting, and he would rather have died than have given up his brush.”

“You will show me what he did, Father Arsène, will you not?” said the young man, letting the indirect reproach pass unnoticed, and seizing the fact that interested him.

“Yes, curious youth, you will see it to-morrow. Come and ask pardon of the Lord for your past and present faults; you have enough with which to occupy yourself throughout a hundred services.”

They entered the church, and the young men remained a little behind, while the archimandrite went to occupy his pontifical throne. The monks, to the number of about sixty, went two by two and bowed before him, then they presented him with incense, which he blessed, and an unusual grandeur transfigured his face. The young men were amazed at witnessing the majesty with which this man, who was so simple in ordinary life, could clothe himself.

The church was lighted only by the tapers and lamps that burned before the images: an almost total darkness reigned at the sides and under the interior peristyle, while the dome, that rose above the centre of the church, was filled with a dim light, a sort of luminous mist, made by the wax and oil that were being

slowly consumed. The incense mounted in gilded spirals up as far as the top of the cupola, and the archimandrite on his throne, lighted by a great taper which was held by a monk standing beside him, read the prayers of the ritual in an uncommonly sweet, tender voice. He distinctly enunciated all the holy words; his small, white teeth shone from time to time in his silvery beard that reached his breast; his face framed in his long hair, which looked like white silk, seemed to shed a mystical light in the half concealed choir.

Démiane looked at him, hidden in the shadow, and said to himself that the man was truly majestic.

Suddenly, the archimandrite closed the book, the taper was put out, and the white light faded from his face. A solemn psalmody in the lowest key of ten rich bass voices began slowly, in semi-tone, and Démiane felt his heart throb. All the ardent supplications, the fallen hopes, the sorrowful resignation, that life may put in a human soul, all were contained in those simple phrases, which were as short as sobs, as modulated as sighs. The tenors took up the strain in a major key, and their young and vibrating voices spoke of the passionate struggles, the work of life, of strength and youth bent to material labor in order to overcome aspirations that were henceforth to be forbidden them then the voices blended into harmonious unity, and an humble, thrilling prayer, oft-repeated, to invoke the mercy of Providence, united all sufferings, all desires in a tender outburst.

Father Arsène's voice rose from out the twilight of

the place, and let fall a few words of peace; the taper re-appeared beside him, while the choir answered him in a hymn of thanksgiving, then silence came, and he raised his right hand to give his blessing. One after the other, the monks clad in their trailing robes, and enveloped in long black veils that fell from their high head dresses, went and bowed down to the ground before their Superior, then the lamps were extinguished, and Father Arsène found himself alone in the church with his two *protégés*.

“Ah!” Démiane tried to say, “those are the songs of Paradise.”

The monk imposed silence upon him by a motion of his hand.

“To-morrow,” said he. “The night belongs to the Lord.”

They left slowly, filled with respect and a sort of fear for that august man, whom, till then, they had thought was only good.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FRESCO.

THE next day, when the first rays of the sun began to shine, our friends left the pilgrims' house. They were eager to run about at liberty, and wished to see everything. After a walk which brought them back to the Monastery dying with hunger, they heard that Father Arsène had sent for them to take some tea with him. They went in haste to what the archimandrite called his cell, and which was in reality, a pretty little two story house with a *rez-de-chaussée*, built of bricks, bright and clean, and perfumed with a sweet odor of old incense, that had clung to the clothes and furniture through many long years.

The monk was awaiting them in his small dining-room, where the *samovar* boiled merrily, sending forth clouds of vapor even up to the windows. Some little rolls of a remarkable whiteness filled a basket, and in order not to condemn his guests to the spare diet of the convent, Father Arsène ordered some butter and cream to be brought—articles that were reserved for the sick and the infirm. Our friends did justice to the breakfast, after which Démiane talked about music, as was natural.

“What do you think of my choristers?” asked the archimandrite, who was happy at last, to be able to ask the question, whose answer he had not wished to hear the day before.

"It was magnificent, it was—I cannot say what it was. I feel that I do not amount to anything with my miserable violin, beside the human voice. Where did you find those voices, Father Arsène?"

"I did not find them, they came here quite of themselves. Every one here sings true."

"Yes, but there was something else besides the accuracy in the voices, there was—there was something which I can neither name nor define, that, which makes one voice different from another, and which makes them sing a thousand times better here, than at the Seminary."

Father Arsène laid his hand gravely on the young man's shoulder.

"There is something else in them in truth, my friend,—when you have found it in your violin, when it shall sing as my men sang last night, as they sing every day, moreover,—you will be a great artist,—and only then. If ever you become proud, and you will be so, for the sin of pride is the very essence of our nature,—remember my choir of monks."

Démiane became thoughtful, Father Arsène smiled.

"Come," said he, in a very encouraging tone, "let us go up stairs and see my paintings." Our friends followed him to the stairway.

The first story was composed of two rooms and a dressing-room, which were nicely furnished though without any luxury; it was the bishop's apartment when he came on his pastoral round; the archimandrite occupied above lodgings that were similarly arranged, but which were much smaller and humbler. As Démi-

ane was wondering at the small size of these rooms, the old man opened a little door that led into a dark corridor, then another door, and the young men who had followed him, found themselves in a sort of *loggia* that overlooked the plain and the valley of the Béré-sina.

“Here,” said Father Arsène, “is my walk, on the days when I cannot go out, when I have the gout. Do you not think that this is worth more than to have a few superfluous square *mètres* in my apartment?”

Démiane could not grow weary looking at the landscape that wore the golden hues of autumn, at the great black pine trees which stood out bold and sharp on the pale, yellow masses of the slender birch trees, at the faded verdure of the meadows, and his eyes feasted on color and form, as his ears had been intoxicated by the music in the church. He felt a thousand new sensations which he was unaware of before, and which he could not even divine, but whose confused intuition threw him into a sort of troubled ecstasy.

As he turned to ask a question, he was quite surprised to see the walls of the *loggia* covered with paintings, and forgetting what he was about to ask, he approached to examine them better.

It was the exact reproduction of the landscape which he had under his eyes; the little river, the dismantled bridge, the plain, and the white roads that scaled the hills, all were there; but on the rising ground the artist had placed a battery of artillery, battalions in the plain; combatants and corpses, all was dimmed, worn away by time, but an extraordinary truthfulness gave to this

work, which was more like a colored engraving than a picture, a striking appearance that provoked one's attention almost rudely.

"It is the battle," said the archimandrite who had followed Démiane's movement.

"What battle?"

"The one that respected the Saviour's face on the monastery door, and that left us so many corpses to bury."

"The XII year?"

Father Arsène made an affirmative sign of his head. *The twelfth year*, such is the name by which Russians designate without periphrases and without adjectives that bloody epoch. The two words evoke at once, a world of memories and thoughts, and after sixty years, one is surprised to find the trace of it still bleeding in the hearts of the peasants and humble people.

"But how did it happen that any one should have had an idea of painting three great pictures, each one of which is as large as a room, in this place exposed to the wind and snow?"

"It was done during the battle," Father Arsène replied. "When the misfortune happened, the archimandrite of that time sent for a painter, from where I do not know, to repair the frescoes of our church, which were much damaged. The artist had been at the Monastery for several months, and worked a little every day, when the French army passed near here on its retreat. We were blockaded, and he with us. He had come to this height to witness the spectacle of the combat, and he found it so fine, so heroic, that he went

for his brushes, and hastily traced on the wall which was covered with plaster, the scene under his eyes. You see here, the uniforms of the French; there, the grey capotes of our troops; that General down there has his head torn away by a shell, which you see in the wall, over his shoulders."

Démiane went to see the shell, which had carried off a piece of the landscape.

"Well, the painter was working there, just at the moment when the shell struck the wall; how was it that he was not wounded? It was the design of Providence to warn him of his danger without hurting him. The man remained, nevertheless, and finished his work in the midst of a hail-storm of bullets, for he served as a mark. He did not even perceive it, so they have told me, so much did the ardor of his work absorb him from the entire world, and he never left his brush, until there remained not an inch of wall to cover."

Démiane listened with his eyes wide open.

"I understand that!" said he, enthusiastically, "he only thought of painting. There you see, Victor, that is also a calling. I would like to have been that man; he loved his art."

"He was not a great artist, however," added Father Arsène with a smile, "but he was an earnest man, and, see, the Divine hand has preserved his work, for, after fifty years it remains almost the same as it was the first day."

"Painting remains," murmured Démiane, "music flies away."

"Now you are jealous!" said the archimandrite,

pinching his ear. "Music remains, because it is printed, and because every one can play or listen to it, while if you had not come here, you could not have seen these paintings."

"Yes," sighed the young man, "the composer survives, but the poor performer—"

"No ambition, my son, no ambition. Be contented, if you cannot do more, with giving a few moments of pure enjoyment to those who listen to you, and do not envy that to which you cannot attain. It would be a wrong feeling."

They descended the stairs, and a few hours later the diligence carried away the two brothers on the road to Moscow.

CHAPTER XIV.

FURNISHED APARTMENTS.

FATHER KOUZMA was very much moved at his sons' desertion, and with his proper wrath was mingled a great deal of sorrow. He vaguely felt that he had not shown enough affection towards Démiane, and at the same time not enough solicitude. Without explaining it to himself very clearly, he felt he had done wrong in allowing the young boy to grow up in full liberty, almost without any rule, and entirely without any duties. He was incapable of appreciating the force of the artistic feeling which drew his son into another career, but he could understand that it was too late to bend under the yoke of a seminary, that head which until then had never known any other law than its own good pleasure. The result of these reflections was to put more bitterness into the poor man's heart, but also, more indulgence, and when Monsieur Roussof, after having let the first wave of anger pass, began to speak of it again, and asked him what he intended doing in the face of the accomplished fact, the priest answered, that he could not let his sons die of hunger.

"I agree with you," the physician replied, tranquilly; "but they will not die, be sure of it: they have too great a desire to live!"

"If he had only left me my Victor!" the father sighed.

"Yes, you have always had a preference for your first-born, and it was this preference which estranged the younger from you; one is punished for such injustice, Father Kouzma, and roughly punished. Victor attached himself to Démiane, precisely because he felt, without realizing why, the need of repairing your indifference in regard to his brother, and now the elder has followed the younger in order to compensate him for his distant home."

"It is you who are the cause of it all!" grumbled the priest, with a chagrined air; if you had not given him a violin, none of this would have happened!"

"Then, something else would have happened," the physician philosophically replied; "but you may be assured that Démiane would never have become a sheep of your fold."

Without stopping to notice the irreverence of this metaphor, Father Kouzma sighed and promised to send ten roubles a month to his sons to help them to live, as soon as they should have sent him their apologies, and moreover, he pledged himself to let them try to earn their own living with the aid of this small help for two years, and not to use his paternal authority to recall them to him, except in the case of their conduct becoming reprehensible or scandalous.

When the announcement of the success of their adventure reached the two brothers, they were occupied in installing themselves in an extremely modest room, situated in a populous quarter of Moscow. In spite of their modest pretensions, they found they could not dream of taking rooms to themselves, on account of the

price, and were obliged to fall back on furnished houses, where they let *corners*.

It is difficult for a French reader to imagine that one can hire a *corner* and not a room, though the room might be a closet as narrow as a corridor, without fire, without air, but furnished at least with a door, which gives to its occupant the illusion and vanity of solitude. However, as Russian lodging-houses, even the poorest of them, are generally divided into very large, badly disposed rooms, which lead into each other without any halls or outlets, one sees that the occupants of the last room in the row must pass through all the other rooms whenever they please. Therefore, in order to overcome this inconvenience, they invented movable partitions — not partitions, properly speaking, but separations, formed either by screens, or curtains supported by rods, these rods themselves being held by small, turned wooden columns, which cost very little and have a most graceful effect.

The proprietors of lodging-houses did not stop, however, half-way on so fine a road. A large chamber for a single gentleman? Why, they would not earn enough even to save them from dying of hunger! Being given a rent of — it did not suffice them to earn so much on the combined rents, it was necessary that each room should bring in the maximum.

Owing to the system of separations, they placed two beds in one room, then three, and finally four, one in each corner when the chamber happily did not have its stove precisely in an angle, which, unfortunately for the masters of lodging-houses, is almost the absolute

rule. However, room can be made elsewhere than in Heaven, and as a corner does not always imply a right angle, they made corners in the acute, between the stove and the wall; only such are let at a lower price. The most desirable ones are next the window, because it is lighter there. However, in winter, the window corners fall slightly into disrepute, on account of the cold.

The two young men hoped to be able to procure themselves a room in which there would be only two corners, and where consequently, they would be alone together, but that kind being very much sought after, they could not find one.

Their sojourn in the hotel where they alighted, made quite a hole in their little fortune, and they decided to take corners in the largest room they could find, and having seen one day a little piece of paper stuck on a window bearing these words: "To let, two corners for two quiet young men," they looked at each other and smiled.

"Are we quiet young men, Victor?" asked Démiane.

"I think so," replied the good fellow, and they entered the house.

The bargain was arranged after some discussion touching the question of price, and that very evening they found themselves in possession of their respective beds. The tenants of the other corners made their appearance about nine o'clock. One was a medical student who carefully concealed his nihilistic opinions, for they had already caused him to be sent away from quite a number of corners; the other was a furrier

apprentice, who brought in his clothes the most abominable odor of furs, but neither one nor the other seemed displeased with the looks of their new companions.

"You belong to the clergy, do you not?" the student asked Victor, after having looked at him for a minute without saying anything.

"Yes," replied he innocently; "why?"

"That can be seen at once."

And that was the only information which the young man could obtain. The two old *corners* began to smoke abominable cheap tobacco, which made Victor very ill, but he did not dare to show it. Démiane also frowned, but to overcome the nausea, he accepted a cigarette from his neighbor the student, and this homeopathic remedy succeeded perfectly with him.

"Well, one is not so badly off," said the young musician, on awakening the next morning, when he saw the two other *corners* had disappeared, doubtless to attend to their daily occupations.

"No, not too badly. If they would only not smoke that abominable tobacco which smells like cabbages!" said the poor boy, smiling.

"One gets accustomed to it, you will see! Now, we will take a glass of tea to console ourselves, and then I will go to the post to see if there are any letters."

Two hours later, he returned from the post-office with so joyful a face, that Victor stood open-mouthed before him, not daring to question him.

"Father has forgiven us," said Démiane, with a self-contained, but eager vibrating voice, as he entered.

Victor threw himself on his brother's neck and burst into tears. They both sat on one of their beds, Démiane holding his brother still clasped to him.

"Forgive me! forgive me!" murmured he, "it is not my fault, Démiane; I did not wish to give you pain, but I was so unhappy thinking that our father was angry with us! I did not say anything to you about it all this time, but it weighed so heavily on my heart, oh! so heavily!"

He sighed deeply, then wiped his eyes and smiled at his brother.

"You are an angel," said the latter, "and I am only a fool. I ought to have thought of the sorrow you must feel, while since our departure, I have only thought of music."

"It was very natural," said Victor, excusing Démiane as he always did; for you, music is everything. What does our father say, read me his letter!"

"It was Monsieur Roussof who wrote; we will ask father's forgiveness immediately, and then he will write to us himself, and, do you know? he is going to send us ten roubles a month!"

"How good he is!" murmured Victor; "we offended him, and not content with pardoning us, he wishes to help us."

Démiane had not considered it from that point of view; he became grave, and meditated for a few moments.

"He is good," said he at length, "and I am going to make him my humble excuses for myself and for having brought you away without his permission. If you

repent of having come, Victor, you must return; we have still enough money left for your journey. I would not wish to have you here while your heart is there with them."

Victor did not reply immediately, but when he raised his eyes to his brother's face, a firm, frank resolution shone in his look.

"I will remain with you, brother," said he; "now that father has forgiven us, I have no more sorrow, no more remorse; I am happy to be with you and to be able to help you to live in the future."

The two brothers seized each other's hands and looked at one another with a new tenderness, a new confidence.

The letter was soon written and put in the post, then after a little walk, our friends returned to their home. Their dinner was of tea, bread and cheese, for it was impossible for them, until they had received the price of their first month's lessons, to procure themselves more costly daily fare. But the appetite usual to their age and the good news they had received in the morning, made them find the meal delicious.

"Now," said Démiane, when they had devoured the last crumbs and drained their tea-pot, "I am going to give ourselves a little concert. My fingers are itching, I have not touched my violin for a week."

He plunged into the famous trunk at the risk of disturbing its skillful packing, and drew forth the precious object, together with his exercises which never left him. The pages were worn at the corners, but Démiane

knew the studies by heart, and if he looked at the book as he worked, it was simply from a spirit of discipline. He made himself a rack with the samovar, and conscientiously began the first exercises.

He had not played more than ten minutes when a moan was heard behind the door. Paying no attention to it, he continued. A second moan, accompanied by deep sighs, followed the first without loss of time. Surprised, he stopped, with his bow in the air; silence was re-established. After a moment devoted to persuading himself that he had not heard aright, Démaine continued his exercises.

It was not a moan that answered him, but a modulated groan, that began by a prolonged yawning, like a door that is closed against its will, and finished in a frightful howl.

"What is that?" asked Démiane stopping again.

No one replying, he took up his bow, but just as he was touching the strings the same noise was repeated.

"It is the dog of the proprietress!" exclaimed Victor, running to the door.

A frightful black spaniel entered, rolling his "loto-ball" eyes, as the people say, his "convex ones" as refined people express it, in a much less picturesque manner. Fat, old, aggressive, with his hair slightly worn off on his back, this creature, ill-favored by nature, entered, stopped in the middle of the room and looked at our friends.

"Do you wish to come in?" said Démiane to it. "Very well, sit down there and leave us in peace."

Protesting with all the anger that was kindled in his

frog-like eyes, the King-Charles declared he would not sit down; but the young man looked at him no longer, seeing which, the animal carefully sat down.

“Bzz!” sang the bow on the lowest note.

“Ouaouh!” replied the dog, raising his nose towards Heaven, in a perfectly vertical line, to such a degree that one could no longer see his head, which was hidden by his fat, bald neck, which was red in spots.

“He does not like music, *Démiane*,” said Victor, with an alarmed air.

“Go away, then!” said our friend, “no one has a right not to love music.”

But the dog had no desire to go away, and to the pressing invitation which was given him, accompanied by a demonstration that was still friendly, but very decided, he replied by showing his teeth, and by remaining obstinately seated.

“Give him some sugar,” suggested Victor, who did not like violent measures.

With some regret, for sugar was dear, *Démiane* took a bit of the precious substance and gave it to the dog. The latter allowed himself to be put out of the room, and after having carefully shut the door, the young musician returned to his violin. At the end of two measures, the most heart-rending cries made the house resound from the cellar to the garret, but *Démiane* was determined to pay no attention to them, and telling Victor to close his ears, he kept on practising with all his might for five minutes.

Suddenly the door opened and the proprietress pale with fury, entered, her dog under her arm.

"You have not common sense," she exclaimed, "to make a poor beast cry in that way. Why have you come here with your music? I have only quiet people here, and I forbid you to play on the violin, do you hear?"

"You should have written it on the paper stuck on the window," replied Démiane, who felt his anger rise to his face.

"It was there, sir!"

"How was it there? I do not know how to read, then."

"Yes, sir, it was there; it said that we did not wish any but quiet people."

"Well, we are not quiet people, then?"

"No, people are not quiet when they play music, and such music! If it were on the piano, at least one would know what it was."

"Does your dog like the piano?" Démiane asked, calmly.

"He cannot abide it, the poor darling! But you are going to stop, or else you will leave."

"We will leave, dear madame; I should be a wretch to annoy your dog."

When she saw the young man was so decided not to yield, the proprietress became less belligerent.

"Perhaps he will accustom himself to it, the dear treasure," said she; "you can try, but if he does not, you must go."

The treasure did not accustom himself to it, on the contrary, and after half an hour Démiane declared he would rather walk on his knees, than to listen to such

a concert any longer. But as they had paid for a week in advance, and, as our friends were not rich enough to assume two rents at once, Démiane took his violin under his arm, and during four pleasant days that the clemency of Heaven granted him, he went to charm the birch-trees of the *Champs-des-Vierges*, outside of the city, where no one listened to him, and where the stray dogs did not seem to possess the same antipathy to music, as did the frog-eyed specimen of their race.

CHAPTER XV.

PETIT-GRIS.

THE two brothers soon learned that it is very difficult to find one's self a lodging, when one plays the violin. For several weeks they wandered from *corners* to *corners*, and were always sent away, either by the proprietors, or by their room-mates, whose meditations were troubled by Démiane's exercises. At length, Monsieur Roussof having found another pupil for the young musician, our friends were rich enough to take a room to themselves, and it was with a heart swelling with pride that Victor set forth in search of that Eden.

After some days of unprofitable running about, he reached an out-of-the-way quarter, quite at the end of the city, near the Nijni-Novgorod railway station, and came upon a wooden house, with a *rez-de-chaussée* and a garret, out of which the ingenious proprietor had made a small room, which was very old, so much so, that it was gently inclining towards the passers-by, and threatened some fine day to fall into the small narrow garden that separated it from the street. The defaced logs of which it was built, made it look like a peasant's cabin, but window-shades of very white calico descended to a third of the windows, which were filled inside by plants covered with a rich foliage. Victor stopped and looked at the modest dwelling. — "How comfortable

one might be there," he said to himself; "if there were only any part of it to let!" There was a little square bit of paper attached to one of the windows; he approached, and read with a blush of satisfaction: "To let, a room for two bachelor gentlemen."

Full of hope, he rang at the little door, which had formerly been painted yellow; a woman of about forty years of age, with a sad air, and poorly clad, came to open it for him, and he at once felt a sort of sympathy for her.

"Are you the mistress of the house?" said he to her without ceremony; "I have come to see the room which is to be let."

"Come in," said the sad woman; "here it is."

She opened a door and Victor saw a pretty little room, furnished with two iron beds, a toilet table, an *étagère* and another table. The wall at the end of the room was occupied by an old piano, mounted on four round legs which were ornamented by brass capitals, in the style of the First Empire; it was a frightful piano, which must have had a tone as shrill and as sharp as the noise of grasshoppers in summer. The paper, that was bright blue, gave a glad, peaceful look to the little room.

"If the piano is in your way," said the proprietress, with a melancholy tone, "it can be removed, but I hardly know where it could be put."

"It can remain there," said Victor, concealing his delight. "But I ought to tell you that my brother plays the violin; do you think it will disturb you?"

"No," said she. "That will not disturb me. My

husband also used to play the violin at private balls but he is dead."

"Perhaps then, it might give you pain?" said Victor, who was always full of compassion towards human misery.

"No. I think rather, it will give me pleasure. There is another tenant in the next room; I will ask him in regard to it, but I do not believe it will annoy him; he works at a German musical-instrument maker's and he brings home violin handles and all sorts of wonderful things, to work on for his own account evenings, and on feast-days."

Victor remained thoughtful for a while; but a man who made violins could not dislike music.

"And how much is your room a month?"

"Eight roubles with the linen and the *samovar* included."

It was a great deal compared with our friends' resources. Victor bargained for an hour and obtained a reduction of two roubles, which left a price fabulously cheap.

"And for your food," said the still afflicted proprietress, "when you wish it, I will serve you a dinner for twenty-five kopecks for each person, a soup and one other dish."

"Agreed," replied the young man.

He hastened to make sure of this palace, and then returned to his lodgings full of joy and pride. He praised himself mentally in regard to his negotiation, and it needed but little to make him believe himself a diplomatist.

Démiane was none the less delighted with the blue room; it was a little out of the way, it was even very remote from every thing, but:

“You will see how pretty it will be in the spring!” said Victor. And then they were alone in their room.

That privacy could not cost too much. Their moving was accomplished without much expense: they each took their trunk by one of its handles, and, carrying all their fortune with them, entered their new dwelling-place, one fine evening in November.

When Démiane had seated himself and had wiped his moist brow, he remarked:

“It seems to me, that we are going to be very happy and are to begin a new existence.”

They had scarcely had time to look at their furniture, when some one knocked at their door.

“It must be the proprietress who has come to ask if we wish the samovar,” said Victor.

He opened the door hurriedly. It was not the proprietress, but a little blond man, so blond that his hair looked white, with a red, scant beard and china-blue eyes, which were as bright and expressive as china-blue eyes generally are not.

“Good-evening,” said he, stopping at the threshold. “I am your neighbor, and I live in the next room. The proprietress told me that one of you plays the violin. I make violins myself. Permit me to make your acquaintance, and to introduce myself: André Stépanitch Ladof, from the government of Voronège, fallen in Moscow by chance and employed at Miller’s, the musical-instrument maker at Ivanoskaïa.”

After having delivered this speech in one breath, he bowed and stood awaiting an answer.

"Victor and Démiane Markof," said the young musician, smiling. "I shall be a great artist in the future if I can succeed in becoming a musician, and my brother is my prophet, while he is waiting for something better; we are the sons of a priest, from the government of Koursk, and much pleased to make your acquaintance."

The young men shook hands, and André entered their room.

"Do you see that piano?" said he, pointing to the forlorn instrument; "I took it completely to pieces last year to learn how it was made, and I put it together again all by myself. By the way, I do not mean to say it is better on account of that. Do you play the piano?"

"A little," said Démiane, "but so little that it is not worth mentioning."

The little blond man began to laugh.

"I knew," said he, "a man who played the flute and who learned the piano, in order to accompany himself when he played, when he had no one to render him that service. I do not pretend to advise you to do the same, but a violinist should always know how to play the piano, were it only to be able to put his accompanist right when he makes a mistake. Gentlemen, will you come to my room to take a cup of tea; you have something else to do to-night than to occupy yourselves about your household; I shall be happy to have you accept my hospitality."

The odd little man led his guests into the next room

which presented the strangest appearance. Pieces of ivory, ebony and mahogany were lying *pell-mell* in a large Russian bowl, that once had been red and yellow, but whose color was now entirely rubbed off by the knocks from so many corners. An inextricably tangled skein of strings of all sizes, was fastened to a nail, and hung down to a table, which was placed across the window and was covered with many differently shaped tools; a rather decided odor of glue filled the apartment, but for the moment it was overpowered by the perfume of hot tea, and the strong smell of the coal smoke from the samovar. A plate full of rusks and a basket containing two small loaves of white bread gave proof of the hosts' munificence.

"Do not pay any attention," said he, "to all those articles that are on the walls; there is no evil spirit whatever in them."

Naturally, our friends looked intently at the things to which they were not to pay any heed. Their shapes were, indeed, calculated to suggest some witchcraft, some secret incantation. They were simply the boxes and handles of violoncellos and violins, but these unfinished pieces had something mysterious and fantastic about them; the black holes, especially, in the middle of the boxes, suggested the idea of some demon ready to jump forth. When the proprietress went away, after having brought the cream, a strange noise was heard in one of the boxes,—the largest one which was suspended over André's head. This noise, which was like a moan, was repeated, then a scratching made the sonorous instrument resound. The two brothers looked at each other with a sort of shudder.

“Is there an evil spirit there?” said André, who seemed by nature imperturbable. “If there is one, let him show himself. Appear!” cried he in a thundering voice, stretching his arms towards the box.

The moan was repeated feebly and sharp as a needle, and the same scratching was repeated with new strength. Just as André, with a candle in his hand, was approaching the box to ascertain the cause of so unusual a manifestation, and our friends were looking at each other with an indefinable anxiety, the head of a little grey cat appeared on the edge of the violoncello’s sounding-board, surmounting two little paws that were amply furnished with claws, and which were trying to raise the kitten’s body.

“What, is it you who have caused us such alarm?” said André, who it seemed had observed his guests without looking as though he were noticing them; “it is you, Petit-Gris? How the devil did you succeed in getting in there? You jumped in it from the bureau? And you took a siesta there? And now you want some cream? How will you manage to get down at present? It is not everything to occupy an elevated position, one must know how to leave it nobly; ask ministers about it, when they put others in their places!”

Petit-Gris, who was greatly perplexed, had succeeded in stationing itself on its four paws on the edge of the hole, but the distance from its post to the table was a formidable one for such a little creature. For though it raised its back and swung its tail for a balancing-pole, its equilibrium was very unsteady.

"Would not one say it was European politics?" said André, seeing it oscillate. "Well, come, my friend, and learn that greatness is sometimes a very painful burden."

He took the cat carefully under its body, raised it in the air, and turned it thus around his head, then placed it on the table, when this animal, which was yet destitute of moral education, and probably destined never to have any, went immediately to the cream-pot.

"Wait!" said André, stopping it on its way, not without encountering an energetic resistance. He poured out some cream for it in a saucer, and the cat began to lap it with evident satisfaction, after which it sat down, and winked its eyes at the company, while passing its tongue over its chops with voluptuous slowness.

"So young," said André, as he poured out some tea for his new neighbors, "so young and it already possesses all the vices! Ah! gentlemen, the world is well made! Nothing is made better! Petit-Gris was born lazy, a glutton and a thief, and admire Providence! Here am I, just at the right moment, with a violoncello box for his siesta, and cream for his supper! What foresight!"

The two brothers not understanding his irony, kept silence, for want of knowing what to say; Victor ventured, however.

"Is that your cat?" he said, timidly.

"There is where shines forth in all its beauty, the occult power that governs us," André replied; "no,

gentlemen; no, my friends, as I dare to call you, Petit-Gris is not mine; it belongs to my landlady, and it is myself whom it loves! Not only does it love me, but by a mysterious law of affinity, I, who do not care for it, shelter and feed it. It sleeps on my own pillow, gentlemen, and at night, when I move and disturb it,—involuntarily, I beg you to believe—it gives me a stroke with its paw to make me return to the order and submission which is the position of man in relation to the beast, when once he has allowed it access to his domicile.”

“Do you like cats?” asked Victor, who understood less and less.

“I? not at all! I do not love nor fear them; they are nothing more to me than other animals.”

“Well, then, why are you so kind to that one?” asked Démiane, who felt there was something hidden under this apparently trifling babbling.

“Because,” said André, laying the palm of his hand on the edge of the table, “if I permit that animal to enter my home, I also owe it hospitality, in the true sense of the word. It comes to me with confidence; should I betray it in that noble sentiment and make myself despised by a cat—such a cat! a little bit of a cat,—by having acted disloyally towards it? I ought to have forbidden it access to this room, I had not energy enough to do it, and besides, cats slip in everywhere! I did resist it a little, but feebly; it felt my inferiority and has made use of it from that time to domineer over me completely. It is the eternal history of man and woman, of Sampson and Delilah, of peoples and

governors. Petit-Gris, you are at once a moral and historical lesson!"

The cat looked in turn at the three young men, opening and shutting its green eyes, whose pupils looked like black lines scarcely defined in their centres. The young men listened with astonishment, and Victor asked himself if their host were not a little insane, when the latter, turning towards Démiane, said to him:

"How old are you? if my question is not improper."

"I am eighteen years of age," replied the young man, a little ashamed at not being any older.

"And you?"

"I shall soon be twenty," replied Victor, with assurance.

Twenty years is a respectable age, and one can confess to it with a bold front.

"You are very young to try the great plunge! But one gets used to it all the sooner. I was younger than yourselves when I took my great leap in the slough of life."

"You have not always, then, been a musical-instrument maker?" asked Démiane, who at last seized a tangible thread.

"Ah! you perceived that, young man? Not bad for a beginner. No, my neighbors and friends, I have been a musical-instrument maker only four years; until then, I was a law-student in the University of this good city of Moscow, and I had only one year more of work before me to obtain my license, when I

became a musical-instrument maker—a fine trade, gentlemen!”

“Of your own will?” asked Démiane, emboldened by the certainty of being on the road to the truth.

“Of my own will, if one wishes it. Yes, in this way, that I preferred to be a musical-instrument maker than to be a bootmaker or a clerk in a bazaar; but it was not of my own will that I ruined my career; why should I hide it from you? It is not a mystery, and then you are not one who would try to harm me! I was compromised in a scandal at the University, like a fool as I was; I grazed Siberia; fortunately I went no farther. But, there was no longer any professional career possible for me, and, *ma foi!* I took up making violins! That is my history.”

Démiane remained silent; after a moment he expressed his thoughts thus:

“You said just now,—I beg your pardon—that you were a fool for having taken part in that scandal; it was a demand I suppose; did you wish unreasonable things?”

“Ah! no, nothing unreasonable! But it was the manner in which it was done, which was stupid! One should not make a row when one has the right on one’s side! One should await one’s time, and when it has come, then speak. It is not by breaking chairs that abuses are reformed!”

Victor was nearly dead with fatigue and hardly heard the conversation his brother was holding with their new friend; after half an hour, Démiane rose, and, giving his hand to their host, said:

"I think that I shall importune you very often, for I have everything to learn, and you seem to me to be a good professor."

"I will teach you all you wish," replied the latter, "even how to make violins, if you like."

"To make violins?" repeated Victor, waking up suddenly.

"And projects for laws for an extremely far off time, a time when neither Petit-Gris, nor you, nor I shall be any longer of this world," said André, as he lighted them to their room.

CHAPTER XVI.

VICTOR CHOOSES A PROFESSION.

VICTOR passed his evenings with Benjamin Roussof; the latter would have preferred Démiane, but without doubt his studies gained more from the guidance of the elder brother, who was more serious and whom it was more difficult to annoy, in spite of his great timidity. Victor possessed a fund of firmness, patience, while his brother had only will. Patience and persistence are often confounded, and yet they essentially differ; the latter will admit of impatience and rebellion, which the former forbids. Démiane knew how to resist Fate, to overcome material obstacles, to struggle with the difficulties of mechanism, and with those which his lazy or wilful pupils gave him constantly, for he wished to succeed, and he was determined to undergo a good deal for that end—but *the true patience* that begins ten times over the same work which has been destroyed by the capricious hand of destiny, that takes it up again without wrath, without concealed anger, and without even hidden bad humor, this was Victor's cross, and was to abide with him.

One day just as Démiane was preparing to go out to give his lessons, the number of which had increased, Victor timidly touched him on his arm and stopped him.

“Would it be disagreeable to you,” said he to him, “to have me earn my living by manual labor?”

“That depends,” replied Démiane smiling, for he thought he was joking. “If it were to cut wood or cart bricks, I would be very glad to have you keep from it.”

“It is not that,” said Victor more and more confused, as though he were confessing some fault; “but André asked me if I would like to work with him at his employer’s; one earns a great deal of money it seems, when one has become expert—I would like that occupation if you would not object.”

Démiane became serious; in realizing that he knew nothing and that he had everything to learn, he put himself on the road to wisdom, and on that path, he had come upon much that he knew very well, but whose utility had not been apparent to him until then. Among other things, he had recognized that a life of privation is fine and comfortable as regards one’s future, but that in the present, it demanded a singular abnegation in one’s every day life. He had also seen, that it pained his brother to be earning less than himself—not that it hurt his pride, poor Victor having made for a long time a sacrifice of earthly vanities—but, it hurt his fraternal love, and he reproached himself for costing his brother more than he brought him. A less prejudiced judge would have taken into account, that, by reason of the inevitable necessity of better clothes and more clean linen, Démiane who went out oftener, spent also a great deal more than himself, but Victor neither could nor would, look at things from his point of view.

“I would like so much to make violins,” he insisted

in a beseeching tone; "you know very well that the one you have is not sufficiently good; when I know how, I will make you one."

Démiane drew his brother to him; they seldom kissed each other now, for they had passed the age of youthful abandon, but from time to time a warm clasp did both of their hearts good.

"You know very well that I cannot refuse it," said the young musician, "and yet I ought to, for you will fatigue yourself, and perhaps make yourself ill."

"Oh! as to that, never," said Victor, laughing, so happy was he. "You know my natural laziness; I think you can rely on that to assure yourself that I shall never do too much."

Démiane shook his head. In their small household it was Victor who had taken upon himself all the domestic duties; he brought the water, arranged the room, and busied himself with the petty details of life, and this position seemed quite a natural one to them.

"Well," said the musician, "do as you please, brother, and it will be for the best."

The next morning, Victor followed André to Miller's the musical instrument maker. What he learned, and what he earned there, are things little interesting in themselves, and he did not talk much about his apprenticeship. When he came home, he had a happy look, his health seemed to improve from the change of surroundings and the long walks that were the consequence of it. Monsieur Roussot, on hearing of his determination, showed more friendship. Benjamin alone made fun of him for three days, and then, no one thought any more about it.

A few weeks later, one Sunday, while our friends were busy introducing a little order in their home, which was sadly compromised by Victor's daily absence, André knocked at their door and immediately passed his flat nose through the opening.

"Are you very busy?" said he to them.

"Yes and no; why?"

"Because if you had the time this evening, I would take you to a German ball; it is quite worth the trouble."

"A ball where one pays?" asked Victor, who was always economical.

"Yes, a *gesellschaft*, as they say—a club, as we call it. The entrance fee is not high, the style of the club not being very great; what do you say to it?"

Victor looked at Démiane hesitatingly. For his part, he felt no desire whatever to go and see anyone, but his brother had risen with a certain eagerness.

"How much is the entrance fee?"

"Thirty kopecks; it was Miller's employés who introduced me there; they will present you, for it is necessary to be presented, but that does not bind one so very much. You can get intoxicated on condition that you won't make any noise; if you do, they will turn you out of doors—with but little ceremony, I confess—but not altogether without regard for you."

Démiane looked at Victor, then lowered his eyes; he had a great desire to see a ball, were the ball only a German *gesellschaft*, for he had never given the smallest glance into the world, even through a half-opened door, but he did not dare to say so.

"They will make fun of me," said Victor, hesitatingly. He understood his brother's desire, but he was so afraid of being turned into ridicule. "Go then without me, Démiane."

"No," replied the latter, firmly. "I will go nowhere without you."

"While you are giving yourselves up to this battle of generosity," said André, "I am going to brush my best clothes; a dress-coat is not a necessity, you know — with Germans!"

His head disappeared, and Victor looked at his brother with a supplicating look.

"I beg of you," said he, "go and amuse yourself. I will stay here and read a book which André lent me a month ago, and which I have not yet been able to begin."

With a very decided shake of his head, Démiane answered no. The ball had a certain kind of attraction for him, which he would never have dared to define, and which he did not feel capable of confronting alone. He was afraid of what he might feel, and he thought he divined something in it that was a little unhealthy in a certain way, and he did not wish to assume all the responsibility of such a step. Not that he feared becoming intoxicated or being in the society of drunken people; he had seen drunkards at their village, and many flasks were emptied at his father's house on the occasion of the parish feast, and he had been the calm witness of comical scenes which did not shock him, but which would have excited the imagination of another.

What he feared was the word *ball*, which was the

picture he made to himself of a whirlwind in which women with low-necked dresses and flowers in their hair swept past him, as he had once seen them at Madame Roussof's, when he was very young, on the occasion of Benjamin's baptism.

Victor did not think of similar things; he had a horrible fear of hearing himself ridiculed on account of his deformity. He said, voluntarily: "I am a hunch-back," and it did not pain him; he went and came in the streets, indifferent about it, because he knew it was inevitable, because he was obliged to go out in the streets, and that moreover, he never looked anywhere except straight before him; then, the people are naturally charitable, and unkind hearts who are disposed to make fun of an infirmity, are perhaps rarer in Russia than anywhere else, because there respect for the infirmities of nature is almost a religion.

He continued arranging the room silently and a little sadly; his glance encountered Démiane's every moment; their hands met on the same article, but neither one nor the other wished to speak, and the silence weighed on them heavily. It was not that they were slightly vexed with each other, far from it, but each one of them had feelings which he did not wish to communicate to the other, Démiane through modesty, Victor through false shame.

The latter, seeing that his brother would not change his resolution, plunged into a new current of thought. They would be obliged one day or another to abandon the solitude in which they lived. Would he have the sad courage to allow Démiane to confront alone the tor-

ments of his first concert? Monsieur Roussot had said that the young violinist must enter the Conservatoire the next winter; would Victor all his life deny himself the pleasure of going there after him, of being present at his examinations, of hearing him proclaimed a first prize candidate, that first prize about which they both dreamed in their hours of revery? The young man said in his thought that he would never forgive himself for depriving his brother of so precious a sympathy at that solemn moment.

That point gained, Victor asked himself why he should not begin that very day to burn his ships and to kill his pride, since he would have to come to it one day or another, and he did not hesitate long. With a heroism of which he was far from being conscious, he put his foot on what he called his selfishness, and, not without a secret pang, he decided that even on that very day, he would empty in one draught the cup of humiliation.

That will be best, said he, in order to persuade himself that he had only been a coward until then; at least, after this trial, I shall have no more fear. I shall know what it is! I am a man, and I must be brave and not fear to throw myself into the water if I wish to know how to swim.

After having encouraged himself in this way, the young man raised his eyes boldly to his brother's face; but the latter avoided his look, not wishing to let him read any regret in his eyes, and he was obliged to call him.

"Démiane," said he to him, "do you know, we must

go to this ball. I have reflected, and I was wrong. We know nothing of the world; it is necessary to learn how others do; and it will not be by remaining in our shell that we shall ever know it. If you do not think to the contrary, we will go with André."

"And if they make fun of you?" continued Démiane, moved in his turn at the thought of a possible humiliation happening to his dear elder brother. Without wishing to listen to Victor's protestations, who assured him that it had never occurred, and never would, Démiane shook his strong arms: "If any one makes fun of you, brother, he will not do so twice, I answer for it!"

And at once our friends began their preparations for what they called with the boldness of innocence: "Going into the world."

CHAPTER XVII.

GOING INTO THE WORLD.

THE *Gesellschaft* was held in the fourth story of a high and ugly house, in one of the finest streets in the German quarter of the city; it had low ceilings which were as smoke-begrimed as possible and it was badly lighted by candles, which wonderfully resembled tallow ones. These two ball rooms communicated with a restaurant decorated by the name of "*buffet*," where a quantity of all kinds of pork-meat, together with beer and schnapps, was sold in abundance. As etiquette and elegance are the first laws of polite society, all these rooms, comprising a corridor called by the name of "smoking-room," were ornamented with curtains in the embrasures of the doors; but the doors had been taken off in order to facilitate communication, and the perfume of garlic-sausages, mingled agreeably with that of Hamburg pipes and the horribly strong cigars that the Germans prefer to sweet-scented tobacco.

The first impression was painful to the olfactory nerve of our friends, who were but little accustomed to such complicated mixtures, and then—one gets used to everything—they ceased to suffer from it after a few moments. Victor was surprised. Démiane was disappointed; he found the ceilings low, the air heavy, the illumination poor, the women red faced, and the men badly dressed. He had dreamed of something else

Alas! how seldom in our lives do we find that the reality equals our dreams. There are so many who pass away with all their illusions dispelled.

The music sounded and the men hastened towards the women, who seated along the wall, under the yellow light of the candles, were threatened with a deluge of tallow, — happily the prudent majordomo had not been sparing in placing glass rims around them — and every one began to turn methodically to the sounds of one of Strauss' waltzes. O Strauss! king of the waltz, was it for Teuton feet that you gave wings to the *Morgern Blättern* to the *Blauen Donau* and to so many other daughters of your brain? Did you think that the Viennese alone would dance to your melodies on the tips of their agile toes? Vienna waltzes have gone around the world; they are danced in *contre-temps* in Paris, and in measure in Moscow, as in Berlin and even in Potsdam; but there, large flat feet turn round on all their length at once, like an elephant's, and for all the melody can do, it cannot succeed in detaching from the ground the bodies which balance themselves with the grace of a white bear digesting his food, but they are always in time! Now, which is better in an æsthetical point of view: to waltz in time and in the most ungraceful fashion, or in *contre-temps*, in opposition to common sense, as in Paris, but with that smiling *disinvoltura* of people who think themselves perfect, and never imagine anything better.

Démiane could not have solved the question; he gravely watched the couples passing before him, and asked himself how they managed not to tread on each

other's feet. Having found this problem too difficult, he contented himself by looking at the women who were around him. They were for the most part good, fat cooks, whose large red hands made their cheap gloves split open; the ladies'-maids could be recognized by their more elegant dress and impertinent manners. One can never understand the distance that separates a German lady's-maid from her compatriot, a cook; the latter class, moreover, feel their inferiority, and content themselves by getting richer all the faster, which is a memorable compensation.

There were also present some Russians, married to Germans, and looking somewhat out of place; but when one dances, language is of but little importance, and these ladies waltzed with as great a zest as though they had known Goethe by heart.

"Well," said André to our friend, "are you not going to dance?"

"Oh!" said Démiane, alarmed, "I do not know how!"

"What does that matter? One never knows how the first time! Do you imagine that all these good people have had a dancing-master? Do as the others do!"

The waltz ended, a quadrille was formed, and one saw in every direction, anxious looking men, parleying on the subject of a vis-à-vis.

"Go!" said André, pushing the young man forward.

"I don't know any one."

"Neither do I, in the way of women, at least; but never mind that, I am going to present you. To which one? Here are two very nice —"

"I do not know German, almost nothing of it —"

"They are speaking Russ in that corner, almost as well as you can speak German; there is a red-haired one, a brunette, and a flaxen-haired blonde; to which of them do you wish me to present you?"

Démiane hesitated, and his companion dragged him before the young brunette, and said aloud:

"Monsieur Markof!" After which he turned his back and went to join Victor, who, half-hidden by a curtain, looked on enchanted.

The young brunette bowed and smiled; Markof ventured to ask her for the quadrille, while confessing in a low tone that he did not know how to dance.

"Oh! that is nothing," replied his partner; "do you speak German?"

"Very little; and you, do you speak Russ?"

"Not much. But that is nothing."

Since everything was nothing, everything was for the best, and Démiane, directed to do so by his partner, set forth in quest of a vis-à-vis; he found one who was running about from group to group for the same purpose, and two minutes later, Démiane made his *debut* in the world, pushed and dragged by his partner, who made him turn round exactly like a stick.

It was with intense relief that he saw a time of repose come; while the dancers on the other side of the quadrille executed in their turn the first figure, he spoke to the young lady, who was fanning herself energetically:

"It is tiresome," said he to her, "not to be able to express what one thinks."

The young girl looked as though she thought there were a thousand ways of expressing what one thinks, and that one can always discover at least one of them; but she did not know enough Russ to say so with modesty, nor her cavalier enough German to understand it, without having it fully expressed. She contented herself with throwing him a coquettish glance, and with laughing rather loudly, without restraining herself.

"What is your name?" said Démiane, feeling encouraged.

"Caroline Neuman; and you, Monsieur Markof? What is your first name?"

"Démiane."

"It is pretty."

"Caroline is prettier."

"I do not think so."

"It is your turn, there!" cried the voice of the dancing-manager, and Démiane threw himself wildly into the quadrille, provoking a burst of laughter among the dancers. Ashamed of his mistake, he stopped short, and Caroline was obliged to take him by the arm in order to bring him back to the regular step. This incident put them on a very intimate footing, and when the quadrille was over, Démiane had the promise of a second *contre-danse*.

"You must also try a waltz or polka," said the young lady, with a winning smile.

"I do not know how!"

"I will teach you. Come and engage me for the first polka."

And thus Démiane found himself provided with a dancing and a German professor at the same time.

Delighted at this brilliant *début*, and not thinking of engaging another partner, he went to join his brother.

"It is amusing, is it not?" said he to him, while wiping his brow, for it was very hot.

"Why, yes!" replied Victor amiably, who was beginning to feel sick at his stomach, thanks to the united odors of the food and tobacco. "You have been dancing? You have amused yourself? Ah! well, so much the better."

"And you, will you not dance?"

"How can you think of such a thing? I amuse myself looking at you doing so; it is very pretty, and then, you dance well."

This blindness of fraternal love made Démiane laugh, and Victor joined with him, and then sent him away to enjoy his success. Emboldened by two or three turns of the waltz which he had tried without too much dizziness, intoxicated by the warm air, by the light, and by that indefinable something that is always ready to burst forth from twenty-year-old brains, like corks from a champagne bottle, Démiane noticed a little blonde, whom her cavalier had just escorted to her chair. He put his arm around her waist and they both started to mingle in the vortex, pitilessly knocking against the other waltzers, but waltzing all the same, if you please!

When the orchestra stopped, Démiane returned to Caroline, who favored him with a scene of jealousy.

"What," said she, "it was I who taught you how to dance, and then you go and dance with another?"

"But," answered Démiane judiciously enough, "you also danced with other men!"

“Oh! I! it is not the same thing! It was in order not to be compromised by you.”

At the thought that he could compromise a young lady, Démiane became crimson with shame and satisfaction. This idea opened new horizons to him, and might have opened many others, but for his naïveté and his want of worldly knowledge; and Caroline was obliged to make up for it. They began by mending their quarrel, and then Démiane learned that she was a dressmaker; that she left her workshop at eight o'clock at night, that she lived near the church of the Saviour, and that she always went home alone. Consequently he announced to her that he should go the very next evening to see if she had told him the truth; she assured him she would never forgive him for such mistrust, and they both were perfectly certain that they had given each other a *rendezvous* the next evening at eight o'clock, which inspired them with the most contagious merriment.

It was about ten o'clock, and the ball was at the height of its beauty, except that the ladies were too red-faced, and that the gentlemen talked too loud, thanks to the refreshments, when a group of young men gathered under the chandelier. They laughed and talked as loudly as possible, like people who have no secrets; they were evidently the flower of the club. The orchestra was refreshing itself also, and the violinist had gone to join them. It was he who filled the position of *chef d'orchestre*, and at the same time played the first violin, so that he had a right to especial consideration. After talking a moment, he accepted a glass of beer and went

toward the *buffet* with his friends. This libation was not the first one, and the artist staggered slightly as he rejoined the group. Ill luck would have it, that he then observed Victor, who had kept himself half-hidden, but who, emboldened by the company's paying no attention to him, had ventured leaving the tutelary shelter of his curtain.

"What, is that Esop?" exclaimed the musician, with a loud, sarcastic laugh. "Where do you fall from, my friend? Go away and hide your hump; we only want handsome men here like ourselves!"

He drew himself up with satisfaction, and passed his fingers through his hair which was covered with pomade. Démiane rushed into the middle of the group who had joined the musician in chorus:

"It is my brother!" cried he, "and I forbid you to make sport of him; he is worth more in his little finger than you in all your fat body!"

He spoke in Russ, but every one understood him. With his flashing eyes, his hair thrown back, his nostrils trembling, he was so handsome that Mademoiselle Caroline fell desperately in love with him, and all the women cried out in one voice:

"He is perfectly right! men are cowards!"

"A poor cripple!" screamed a voice that was so sharp it overpowered the tumult.

It was Caroline's.

The assemblage, suddenly waxing tempestuous, was divided into two parties. The master of ceremonies,—for the *Gesellschaft* possessed one, no less than the Court, addressed a slight reproach to the musician, in

regard to his want of charity and proper behavior. The latter who was not quite sober, and felt that he himself was in fault, forced a passage in a brutal manner through the crowd of men, pushing aside at the same time, not a few women, who began to scream like peacocks.

“Ah! they blame me,” exclaimed he, “on account of a miserable hunchback, who has stolen in among us? That’s very well, that’s very well, find some one who will make you dance.”

He plunged into the vestibule, seized his overcoat and his *galoches*, which had a place to themselves, and grumbling, disappeared down the stairway.

All looked at each other with astonishment. No *chef-d’orchestre*, no longer any violinist, therefore no more dancing. Public opinion turned immediately against Démiane.

“It is your fault,” cried twenty hoarse voices, “what have you come here for? Put the strangers out! Here we are without any music.”

“Without music?” cried Démiane, “is that what disturbs you? He has left his violin behind him, the fool! I will play you some music!”

He bounded on the platform, seized the violin which the *capell-meister* had left to the care of his subordinates, in the haste of his flight and vigorously attacked a waltz of Lanner’s, which was then very fashionable and which he had played a hundred times. The other musicians sprang quickly to their instruments and caught up with him as best they could; couples were formed and put themselves in motion, while public

opinion, changing its irrevocable verdict for the third time in five minutes, greeted Démiane with a frantic hurrah.

Impassive, not even deigning to smile, so much did he feel himself above the fantastic multitude, the young man conducted his four musicians, as though he had never done anything else all his life. The *capellmeister's* violin was a good instrument, far above the office it was made to fill; and Démiane experienced a strange delight in hearing it resound in his ear, and in feeling it vibrate on his breast; he also felt a singular pride in ruling the crowd that had been so lately hostile to him, and which he now felt was at his mercy. Regretfully he saw the waltz end; he would have liked to have played thus always, lost in an atmosphere intoxicating with triumph for himself and with contempt for others.

When he put down his bow, he was surrounded by the company who implored him to continue, and the musicians themselves, delighted at what might injure their leader—are not people always delighted at what can annoy a higher power—offered their compliments to Démiane.

“You have a great deal of talent,” said the master of ceremonies to him. “Will you do me the honor of accepting a glass of beer?”

“On condition that my brother is invited with me,” Démiane proudly answered.

Victor shared the young musician's ovation, and two hours later they left the place with André, who had philosophically looked on at the whole affair, without

being astonished at anything, and who had cried out repeatedly in favor of his friends.

"They asked me for your address," said he to Démiane, "they will come to-morrow and offer you the *capell-meister's bâton*. Be prepared for the proposition, and do not let yourself be dazzled by such a brilliant prospect."

"It is not possible!" said Démiane astonished.

"Yes, since I tell you so. Only if you accept, you will be overthrown in two weeks' time, by him whose place you take to-day, and who will be restored to favor. You will have a great deal of trouble in making your way, my friend. I have studied you now for three months; no one will ever do anything with you, because you do not intrigue!"

It happened as André had predicted, and Démiane for the first time in his life, was able to give himself the royal pleasure of refusing a position.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MARKOF'S VISION.

THE winter ended quietly. Démiane learned German, which he spoke very well, and Victor began to manufacture very nicely a cheap guitar, for the use of amateurs of modest fortune, when the spring returned to cover Moscow with that veil of dust, which is as natural to it as leaves to forest trees. The young musician was preparing himself to pass the examination for entering the Conservatoire, but a new fear paralyzed his fingers on the vibrating strings: he began to feel the insufficiency of his first studies, and asked himself if they would ever admit to the great masters' lessons, a pupil endowed with so strange a fingering and so audacious a handling of the bow. Monsieur Roussof had procured for him several times tickets to concerts, and he had been able to compare the playing of artists with his own: sometimes with the same passionate vehemence, and they played occasionally with lighter and more conventional feeling, but the delicacy of their shades, the perfection of their rendering discouraged the young man, who already knew enough to appreciate the distance that separated him from those *virtuosi*.

One spring evening, he was waiting for Victor who was a little late, and in order to enjoy the sweetness of a first warm, clear evening, after the long rainy nights

of the preceding month, he opened his window, which had been recently freed from its double panes. The scant lilacs that ornamented the small garden, were budding, precociously and already the little brown bunches could be seen shooting forth among the pale green leaves; it was a promise, and Démiane breathed with delight the odor of the newly born sap that the wind wafted from the neighboring country. As a good scholar, he took up his violin, and to charm away the time of waiting, he played some exercises; then, unconsciously, his fingers quitted their well known motions to create some capricious sounds, which he allowed to group themselves together by chance. A melody came forth; it resembled those he had played an hundred times; but, after a minute, this song arose and leaving the known commonplaces flew away into space with the young man's thoughts. He played, and his mind put on strong wings, that bore him wholly away, body and soul, above the little and vulgar things of this world.

Démiane, finding himself lost in space, soared above the small gray house, which was so peacefully still and in which no artificial light disturbed the sweetness of the declining day. The quiet square through which no one passed except at the hours of the railway-trains to reach the unfrequented station, was also not lighted. In the soft, mellow light of the still, hazy atmosphere, small hired *droshkies* passed slowly along, drawn by weary horses at walking pace and driven by sleepy coachmen, and this silent procession seemed to Démiane the passing of a vision. Was it a sweeter day, and a

more delicate light that bathed the bas-reliefs of the Parthenon at night? Had Orpheus more touching prayers with which to bid the stones group themselves in harmony?

The young man played, and all within him and without assumed a divine, ideal purity: he had quite forgotten Caroline and the want of refinement of her dwelling—the young German girl existed no longer for him, as he saw slowly rising above the earth on a level with his half-closed eyes, the mysterious and symbolically grouped figures of the Panathenæa.

Why did Greece thus visit this obscure and uncultivated boy, who was ignorant of almost every thing relating to her, and who only knew of her through what some photographs and drawings had shown him, or what a few lines read here and there by chance in some half-opened book at one of his pupils, had taught him during his time of waiting? It was perhaps the ancient fable of Orpheus which had awakened in him the sacred rhythm of the old dances. He played forgetful of the world, unconscious of the growing obscurity, his eyes lost in the adorable dimness of the twilight, and he stopped to listen to the voice within him, which was dictating his melody.

“How beautiful that is, brother!” said Victor, stopping before him with his hands clasped in ecstasy.

He approached, but had not dared to enter for fear of disturbing the musician and he listened from without leaning against the little garden’s hedge.

“Is it beautiful? Listen again,” and Démaine recommenced; but the fashion of his song had changed.

He foresaw his future glory, and full of pride and enthusiasm, he ruled the world. Continuing his dream, he was Alexander entering conquered cities on a chariot drawn by six white horses. The vanquished kings marched at his side in the dust, and the four-stringed lyres sang his glory and his omnipotence. The world was his! Then his inspiration exhausted, brought him again to earth, and after a few undecided notes, he began to play with incredible fire Veniavsky's celebrated *polonaise*. All his wishes, all his desires concentrated themselves in this truly extraordinary inspiration, which has no rival of its kind; and Victor, who was enraptured, clapped his hands at the first moment of rest.

The train from Nijni arrived, and a few travellers traversed the square in drosky or on foot, but Démiane paid no heed to them. His own inspiration might perhaps have been disturbed by a return to real life, but the execution of a master's work, overpowering the commonplace sounds, seemed to him an affirmation of his strength and of the power of art.

In the semi-obscurity that is usual on such lovely spring nights, two travellers, one of whom carried a violin-box, were crossing the square slowly, when the younger stopped to listen to the music that was so wonderful, heard at that hour and in that place.

"It is the *Polonaise*, the true and only *Polonaise*," said the younger of the two to his companion, "and it is not at all badly played! It is absurd, it resembles nothing, and he who is playing it is not an ordinary person! Who the devil can the coxcomb be?"

Walking in the dust, they approached the old house and perceived Victor, who was listening with all his soul, leaning against the balustrade. The sounds came forth from the dark window and nothing could be seen from outside.

"Who is playing inside there?" the traveller asked Victor, trembling.

"It is my brother," replied the young man with pride mingled with anxiety.

Perhaps one had no right to play the violin so late, with the windows open! Were they breaking some police regulation? Would they have to pay a fine? Heavens! what would become of them?

"Démiane," said the poor boy, with a stifled voice, "brother, stop!"

"Not at all, not at all! let him continue, on the contrary!" said the new comer. "It is very curious what he is doing there. Who taught it to him?"

"No one, sir; he practised his scales."

"If he will work, he can become a great artist."

"On hearing some one speaking, Démiane stopped playing; he approached the window to call his brother.

"Young man," said the traveller, "come here, I would like to speak to you."

Surprised and also a little anxious as Victor had been, the musician obeyed.

"I have just come from giving a concert at Nijni," said the stranger, "I was passing here on foot, for I do not live far; your music has surprised me. Have you been playing long like this all alone?"

"For very nearly four years," replied Démiane, feel-

ing suddenly that he was in the presence of an arbiter of his fate.

"Would you like to enter the Conservatoire?"

"I have no other ambition."

"Come to see me to-morrow. Here is my card."

The darkness prevented Démiane from reading it, and perhaps also concealed the nervous trembling that had taken possession of him.

"My name is Verlomine," said the stranger, smiling slightly.

At this illustrious name, which had reinstated instruction on the violin at the Conservatoire, where it had fallen into decay, Démiane wished to express his delight and gratitude, but the two travellers' faces were already lost in the gray evening shadows, and their outlines could hardly be distinguished on the dusty back ground of the square.

"What an adventure!" said Victor, when he had recovered his speech.

"The future is mine!" cried Démiane brandishing his bow.

CHAPTER XIX.

ADMITTED TO THE CONSERVATOIRE.

THE next day the young musician returned from his visit both down-hearted and glad. He had been admitted by favor to follow the classes at the Conservatoire as a listener, so as to impress upon himself the importance of method, and the celebrated Professor had declared to him that he knew nothing and that every thing was to be begun over again from the A B C of music.

“Only think, Victor, to begin over everything again from the beginning. He said it was far worse than if I had learned nothing. But I do not believe it, *par exemple!* He said so to prevent me from thinking myself too learned, but if at my age I knew nothing, it would not be worth while for me to begin!”

A certain contentment shone through Démiane's disappointment; he had divined under the master's discouraging words the certainty of his growing talent. The fact alone of having been admitted to listen to the lectures during the two months that were to pass before the classes were over, was of itself an encouragement, and the young man understood it. Monsieur Roussot said the same thing to him when he told him of his adventure; and from his protector's satisfaction, Démiane felt confirmed in the belief that they expected a great deal from him, if he were willing to work.

Our friend was not frightened about the work. His dreamy and unmanageable nature quickly submitted to the necessity of a continual struggle. His father would have been much irritated to have seen how the youth who was so rebellious to the yoke of the paternal house had bent himself to the discipline he had imposed upon himself; and would not have failed to have cried out about the inconstancy of character in general, and about his son's perversity in particular, who now consented to submit to all remonstrances, when at home, would never bear any whatever.

It was in truth with great philosophy that Démiane bore all scoffings from the pupils at the Conservatoire, who looked upon him as a curious animal, and also the Professor's caustic remarks, who justly or unjustly passed for possessing the sharpest sarcasm in all Moscow. He bore not only with a stoical resignation, but with a sort of ascetic enthusiasm, the humiliations of all kinds which his position of an un-classed pupil drew down upon him, and even after a few days he found the life charming, doubtless more on account of what it promised him, than what it then gave him.

The time for the examinations arrived, and Démiane was received with all sorts of admonitions and ironical remarks from his Professor; but he was received, and that idea gave him wings. He regaled Victor once more with a serenade of his own composition, but either from the influence of his daily lessons, or from a particular state of his mind, he did not reach the ethereal heights he had touched on the day that decided his fate.

"I do not know what is the matter with me," said

he to his brother, "what I am playing is good for nothing!"

"Well, Démiane, keep to your lessons, that is better for you meanwhile."

This mentor's advice was faithfully followed, and during the summer months the little building near the railway resounded only to the acrobatic exercises executed by Démiane on all the strings of his instrument.

"Ah!" sighed he from time to time, "if I only had a passably good violin!"

Victor sighed also, more profoundly, perhaps; but gaiety soon returned to their home, and they were sometimes so frolicsome, that even Petit-Gris, who had become with the passing months almost a serious cat, would not always condescend to share their romps, finding them beneath its feline dignity.

André had taken a fancy to his new neighbors, whom at first he had desired to know a little from curiosity, a little out of the goodness of his heart, and a little also to enjoy his superiority over them. For all one may have overcome many social errors and possessed the most stoical philosophy, one is always very glad to be able to make some one say: "There is a clever man!"—were the same person only one's boot-maker, one's baker, or the woman who sells one a cigar at the shop on the corner. André had lived for so long a time with persons who were entirely different from him in their manners, their tastes, and their intellectual level, that a little pride could be very well permitted to him.

After a few days he found pleasure in Démiane's society, and a sort of tenderness was awakened in him in regard to Victor; he felt pity for him on account of his infirmity, and an affection for him because of his good-natured disposition. This tenderness had very soon become esteem; the profound self-denial of the poor being, whose misfortune might have rendered him morose and whimsical, the simplicity with which he cut himself off, so to speak, from the world of living people, claiming at the most, to be fit only to play a supernumerary's part, touched him to the depths of his soul. André knew that really good men are rare, and deserve that statues should be erected to them on the public squares, which would never be crowded, he added. Instead of amusing himself outside, as he formerly did, after having vainly endeavored once or twice to entice our friends to a *café*, by promising to bear the expense, he fell into the habit of sharing their tea, or of making them share his own, evenings. The small "upper-room," with its three guests, heard many strange propositions laid down during the long winter of probation which Démiane passed before entering the Conservatoire. It was, perhaps, the high range of these conversations that prematurely ripened Petit-Gris' character, who grew wearied of hearing them moralize, in regard to her own case, and also in regard to that of many bipeds; nevertheless, one was almost sure of finding toward nine o'clock in the evening, the three friends gathered round the table, with the samovar at one end and the cat at the other, as a mate to it.

The summer had at last come, torrid and dusty, making the stray dogs, which are almost as numerous at Moscow as at Constantinople, loll their tongues, giving happy people frightful nightmares, in which hydrophobia played the principal part. The paint on the small wooden house was peeling off in the sun.

"It will take fire one of these fine mornings," said André, who went out from time to time to assure himself that no unusual smoke yet rose from the roof; but one warms one's self for nothing, and the proprietress is pleased."

The three friends found that fact charming, and Petit-Gris found it more so. Stretched out all day in the place which was the most exposed to the sun's rays, it lost its appetite. Every night, André found it under his window, overcome by the light and heat.

"It smells as though it were burned; it is more than half baked," said the musical-instrument maker, taking it up by the skin of its neck, to turn it round and put it in its paws. "It must have been a cat which invented the sun, but who taught the cat to mew, together with the art of catching mice? Religious beliefs may be perfected by a change, but no one has ever found anything superior to the cat in the way of catching mice."

Victor had grown accustomed to his whimsical remarks, and smiled honestly, because Démiane laughed without understanding them very well. The latter had caught a little of his friend's turn of mind, and Victor almost always understood him, of which fact he was extremely proud; besides, he thought his brother

possessed more cleverness than any one, no matter who, on the face of the earth, it being remembered that he knew but an infinitely small number of persons on the globe.

One particular evening when André, returning home with Victor, announced, "that Petit-Gris would be nice to make coffee of the next day, because she was roasted," Démiane, who returned before them, showed them from the window a square envelope. They hastened their steps and approached the garden, so as to hear the news quicker.

"Victor," said the young musician, "imagine! our sister is going to be married, and father has asked us to go to the wedding!"

"And I? They have not invited me?" said André he stopped suddenly and held out his arm to sustain Victor, who had very nearly fallen to the ground. "What is this? a weakness? a swoon? as the French marquises of the Eighteenth Century said; or '*vapors*,' as the great Catherine used to say, who knew a great deal about them."

As he was speaking, he seized Victor by the collar of his coat with extraordinary force, and carried rather than led him into the room, at the risk of strangling him with his cravat.

"Thank you," said Victor in a sweet voice, when he had regained his breath and was seated. "It is joy, you see."

"Joy at seeing your sister married, you great simpleton?"

"No, not that, — that is indifferent to me; I mean it gives me pleasure, but —"

"Yes, I understand that; it gives you pleasure, but it is indifferent to you; the greater part of what gives us pleasure enters into that category. What joy, then?"

"To 'see my father again," murmured the young man; "and he invites us, therefore he is no longer angry. Oh! Démiane! Are you not glad?"

His hands feverishly clasped his brother's, and his eyes, which were swimming in tears of joy, sought his look.

"Yes, I am glad," replied Démiane, with a sincere smile. "I am very glad; first, because our father has invited us, and because, therefore, he is no longer angry; and then, because he is going to have a son-in-law who will work for him, and because he can take some rest."

"That is so, my friends," said André, who looked at them with his arms crossed, and with a certain moisture in his china-blue eyes, to which he would not have confessed for an empire; "it is very nice; but do you know what you are going to gain by this?"

"A brother-in-law?" hazarded Démiane smiling; he was truly touched, more from Victor's joy, than on his own account.

"You will gain the noblest independence by it, my friends! From the day that witnesses the fortunate marriage of your sister, the paternal allowance of ten *roubles* a month will pass to the place of things that were and that cannot be again, because they will have ceased to exist, like old moons and candles that are burned down to their very ends."

“Why?” asked Démiane, who was a little astonished at these prophetic words.

“Simplicity of beautiful souls! Would you send ten roubles a month to your brother-in-law?”

“I do not know; but it is not he who sends them, it is my father.”

“And from the day on which he takes possession of the cure, who will receive its revenues?”

“He, naturally,” replied Démiane with less assurance, for he began to understand.

“Well, my friends, eat a great deal of paternal food at the splendid wedding; try to store up provisions for yourselves for the winter, under the form of fat and succulent flesh, for you will be reduced next year to your own resources, or I am a fool.”

“That cannot be!” said Victor, recovering his speech. “Our father will not abandon us!”

“You certainly abandoned him, my good friends!”

The two brothers lowered their heads at these words that were so cruel in their curtness.

“And remember well, my dear children, that I do not say this to give you pain! You have the right to quarrel with me, and even to call me names. I would not take it in bad part, under the circumstances. I tell you so, because it is in this way that priests marry their daughters, when they have no sons or when their sons do not wish to take their places. If the young lady had not been so impatient to submit to the yoke of marriage, you might have found yourselves well off when the painful news reached you. She was dying to give herself a master; I regret it more for her sake

than for yours, but nothing can be done. You will probably think that your father has done wrong; well, not at all. First he is acting in his full right, and then, one cannot resist a son-in-law who is going to free one from one's daughter. I feel that if I, André Ladof, had a daughter, and that a son-in-law presented himself——Come, my children, do not put on such a sorrowful look; really there is no cause for it!"

"What shall we do?" asked Victor, while Démiane, with his eyebrows contracted, was undergoing one of those inward rebellions, which used to give him the reputation of having a trying character.

"Accept your new situation with a good grace; find no fault which among other evils, would possess that of being perfectly useless; even forestall, if the effort does not cost you too much, the painful announcement from your father, which might bring between you a disagreeable feeling; tell him that you willingly renounce the sacrifice he has imposed upon himself for you, and that you will henceforth support yourselves."

"You are right!" said Démiane, relaxing his eyebrows, which resumed their usual appearance.

"But," objected Victor, "should André be mistaken?"

"If I am mistaken, so much the better! Your father will be glad to see that you can, in truth, support yourselves."

"But we just get on with what he gives us," timidly murmured the young invalid, who, in his position of cashier, knew better the resources of the household.

"You will deprive yourselves a little more! You are

too happy, my friends, you do not know what poverty is, you are nabobs in comparison to what I was once. Is it not shameful to accept your father's poor ten *roubles*, when you have enough to eat every day and several times a day? Do you know that in those ten *roubles*, there enters more privations in a month for him, than you undergo during a whole year? But you love your comforts, let us suppose that I have said nothing. I have done wrong to meddle with what does not concern me."

He turned on his heel to go to his room, a little hurt and vexed at having to lessen the good opinion with which his friends had inspired him, when Démiane stopped him and put his hand on his shoulder.

"You are right, André," said he to him; "if we have continued accepting this money, it is because we have not realized how hard our father earns it. We will give it up most willingly, and from to-day, will we not, Victor?"

"Yes, brother," bravely replied the latter, electrified by the younger's magnanimity.

"It is fortunate," concluded André, that to-day is the fifth, and that you drew your ten *roubles* on the first!"

To send invitations to people doubtless is all very well, and proves an excellent nature, but vehicles cost something; generally they cost very dear. Our friends held a grand council in regard to the means by which they should go to Gradovka and return again, without selling their clothes, which was equally impracticable. They had almost the necessary sum to go there; but with what should they return?

“Our father has probably thought of it,” said Victor, who was an optimist by nature.

“And suppose he has not thought of it? You well know that we have not yet been able to return Monsieur Roussot the money he lent us with which to come here! We cannot think of borrowing any more from him.”

The case was a serious one, and the two brothers would have been in a cruel embarrassment but for André’s intervention, from whom they had no secrets, and whom they took as confidant after his first question.

“Is it money that you need?” said he, winking his light-colored eyes maliciously. “I have some. How much do you want? Speak, and we will bring out from here the sum required.”

He struck the side pocket of his jacket with so much emphasis that his friends began to laugh, then Démiane said with an incredulous air:

“You have money?”

“Certainly! I have not put the Pactolus in bottles, but I have a few small pears in my garret in case of thirst! Moreover, I am a land-owner! I have an income! Did you not know it?”

“Who would have said so of you?” said Démiane very much surprised, while Victor, with staring eyes, looked at their friend with new veneration and profound amazement.

“That is too true, my dear children, for I consider you both as young children, thanks to your candid ignorance of life, I possess on the Don, very near its mouth, an immense, phenomenal property, which my

uncle, a Cossack, left to me,—for I have the blood of Zaporogus in my veins; it does not appear in them does it?”

“No, not at all,” Victor replied innocently, as he thought of the brown hair and black eyes which tradition gives to the Cossacks of the Don.

“It does not prevent my having it all the same; but probably it is all inside, in the middle of my veins; it must have been that rascally blood that played me the trick of which you know, when I was a student. We were saying then, that I possess an immense domain, *verstes* in extent, my friends, square *verstes* of land! The steppe in all its beauty!”

“Then you are rich?” said Démiane, a little hurt at hearing so late that André was a land-owner.

“Not at all! I have the land, but nothing grows on it! That is to say grass grows there and the buffalo, the one eats the other.”

“But buffaloes are property, and they have a commercial value.”

“Yes, my good friends; but my excellent uncle who knew I had a hot head,—this rascally blood, you know!—also left me an agent to protect his property from my carelessness, when he should be no more. I do not know whether my agent protects my property from anything except myself, but he lives in my house, drinks my cow’s milk and sends me every year under all circumstances —”

He stopped to contemplate the faces of his friends who were listening to him with mouths wide open, then he laughed a moment and continued:

“Two hundred and fifty silver roubles on an average.”

“But he is a thief!” cried Démiane, while Victor’s face expressed not a little pity.

“Ah! no, he is an honest man, after his fashion; I believe he has a child, a girl or a boy, I don’t know which, and he is very quietly accumulating a little pile of money according to that good man’s ideas which do no harm to any one! Follow my reasoning or rather this: my uncle is dead; it was he who was the owner, I am only a picked up heir, an intruder; my uncle might just as well have left his property to the good man as to myself; and he committed a grave error in preferring me; therefore, there is neither crime, nor theft in repairing the injustice of a whimsical old man, who remembered me inopportunely. And the moral of all this is, that there are fifty roubles which you will return to me when you can.”

“It is a great sum,” said Démiane with hesitation; but Ladof had shut his pocket-book so decidedly that the young musician took the bank bill and made no other objection. After a moment, he added:

“Tell me, André, if my question is not improper, how does it happen that you live here so poorly, when you could be better lodged, better fed —”

“Then, my dear fellow, I should have no money at my disposition to give myself a little fancy, like to-day. And then, to tell the truth, I was living here, and I had the greatest trouble to make both ends meet, when his fortune came to me unexpectedly; I remained here, and I am very glad that I did, since I met you.”

The next Tuesday the two brothers took the diligence; their luggage filled but little space, but their delight was as great as a mountain. When the vehicle passed the last limits of Moscow, when the road entered the forest, that eternal forest which one finds every where in Russia, in the neighborhood of great and small cities, Démiane seemed to come out of a dream, and he began to laugh.

“Ah!” said he, in a low voice, “I forgot to speak to Caroline about our journey.”

That was the only regret he bestowed on his amiable German teacher.

CHAPTER XX.

P A R A C H A ' S W E D D I N G .

P A R A C H A had taken nearly ten years to make her trousseau, but such a trousseau! Not a stitch of it that had not been accompanied with a bitter thought, or at least with impatience in regard to some member of her family. Not a mesh of her stockings which might not have recalled to her her grievances against humanity in general and celibacy in particular. Fortunately thoughts do not appear upon clothes, and the sullen betrothed girl was able to allow everything she had to be admired by the young girls who went to the house the day before the wedding for that purpose. The rejoicings which are usual at such a time among the people are not permitted to the clergy; the wedding loses grace by it, and gains nothing in character. The young girls sat opposite one another in chairs ranged along the walls, and looked at each other "full in the eyes," according to the popular expression, but without saying a word; it was in this august company that the two young men, who were much fatigued, appeared after their journey.

The customary embraces were exchanged in the presence of twenty strange persons, who were more or less unfriendly to these vagabond sons, who had deserted the paternal roof no one knew why! These honest people despised music so much that it had no existence

for them, and in their opinion the profession of music did not make one a musician any more than the fact of swinging in a swing gives one a high social position! Poor Victor's heart was very full, and he would have liked to clasp his mother in his arms, and to pet her as in his childhood days, and to kiss with ardor the paternal hand which re-opened the door that had been closed to them so long. He was obliged to give up all these simple joys, and sit down to a repast which they offered them with great ceremony. Paracha waited upon them with a modest demeanor, that was as natural a grace in her as everything else, but which seemed very remarkable to the two brothers. Her face was as shining as a pot of pomade, the effect of the soap that had been used in too frequent lotions, and from repeated rubbings. She wore a dress of a yellowish-gray color, which was the fashion fifteen years ago, and which had miserably stranded on all the unexplored banks of small provincial towns.

In spite of this too brilliant exterior, the young girls, we do not dare to say her friends, or her companions, or even her neighbors, for the daughters of priests have neither friends, companions, nor neighbors,—they are isolated beings, whom marriage alone permits to approach the human species,—the young girls looked at her with envy: in this lottery of life, had she not drawn a husband? A husband, the most difficult object under Heaven to procure for one's self.

This husband was not handsome, however, and should not have excited jealousy; his only merit was in being excessively tall, which was brought about by capricious

nature, at the expense of his rotundity, and which made him greatly resemble a stalk of wild asparagus.

But he was a fine looking man, because he could not pass under the door without stooping, and the general opinion was one of approval.

"What do you say of our brother-in-law?" Victor asked Démiane, when every one having gone to bed they escaped into the garden to talk with freedom.

"Nothing at all; he is the most insignificant fellow I have ever seen. Just the one whom Paracha needs to rule as she pleases."

"Our father has grown old," continued Victor, with a sigh. "It is our fault."

"Yes, brother. But it is also our sister's fault. I have never before perceived how unamiable she is."

"If we had remained —" Victor began.

"We should have been unhappy, and our father would have been none the less so. Our place is elsewhere, brother. Excepting our father and mother, all these people here seem to me to have come from a menagerie!"

What must he have thought the next day, when the menagerie formed the nuptial *cortége* and went to the church under a beautiful July sun!

The men were superb; handsome priests and deacons are sought after by good parishes. Besides, the costume of the Russian clergy, which permits the use of rich and sombre colors, and whose floating form lends so much dignity to the carriage, is generally gracefully worn. The new robes, made of costly silk or woolen material, with their large sombre violet, dark green, and reddish brown sleeves, gave a particular appearance of nobility

and dignity. But their wives ! Crinoline had not yet ended its reign, and the wide striped silk skirts spread themselves pompously over the balloons, displaying to the bright daylight the enormous size of their plaids, and the crudity of their shades. They manufacture in Russia materials of rich heavy silks that are particularly intended for the wives and daughters of priests, and which never find any purchasers outside of that class ; Paracha's wedding offered a remarkable assortment of them.

The bride herself wore a dress with *basques* made of superb brocaded damask, crimson on emerald green, and every one admired the richness of her attire. Over this she let float the classical veil of tulle, which was surmounted by a crown of orange blossoms. A bouquet of the latter at her waist completed her toilette, which all the ladies agreed was perfect.

Father Kouzma was much moved when he blessed his daughter. During the brief remarks which he made to the couple before proceeding with the ceremony, his eyes turned more than once to his wife, who was weeping profusely. Why did she weep ? Her daughter was not going to leave her, and moreover, any other than herself would have considered her departure a blessing. Perhaps she wept because it is the custom ; perhaps also, because she recalled the emotions which she herself had formerly experienced under the nuptial crown, and the misfortunes, the sorrows, the discouragements of the years that had since followed. Father Kouzma's look also rested on his sons, who were respectfully listening to him, and the sight of them seemed to awaken a certain bitterness within him.

“Bring up your children well,” said he to the couple, “do not fear to correct them, that you may teach them the love of duty and submission to your rule. May they be obedient sons, and God will bestow upon you His favors and His blessings as a reward.”

Démiane gently pulled Victor by the sleeve ; but the latter took no notice of it : he was looking at the little door situated near the choir, through which Madame Moutine had just entered ; the young musician followed his glance.

She looked very much as usual, but more sedate ; she seemed to have entered life in earnest, and to have taken the place in it that she was always to fill. Her very simple toilette strangely contrasted with the showy tinsel of those around her, and yet, with her gray linen dress, she looked like a queen surrounded by her court. While Victor was absorbed in the contemplation of his idol, Démiane all at once understood in what luxury differs from taste, and haughtiness from distinction.

He had these sudden illuminations, from time to time, and on this occasion, he was so struck by his discovery, that he forgot to follow the ceremony, and had to be called to order by Victor, just at the moment when he was obliged to hold the metal crown over his brother-in-law's head, an office to which he had been assigned, as he was the tallest man of all in the company.

The promenade of the newly married couple around the desk, took place in the traditional order ; now and then the young men who followed the couple — holding crowns over their heads, with outstretched arms — walked on the bride's dress, which made them perform

the strangest gambols; but no one seemed to consider such gymnastic feats as anything unusual, and everything ended according to the rite.

The following days were passed in festivities; then little by little, the house was emptied, the newly married pair went to make a visit to the young man's father, and the cure found itself as it had been in the past, but without Paracha, which did not seem to trouble any of its inhabitants very much.

The paternal mansion did not possess all the charm for our friends that they anticipated, and they were obliged to confess to themselves that they had greatly magnified it in their imagination. There is none among us to whom it has not happened to dream for a long while of some place formerly caught sight of, some house visited in other times, some persons whom one would have liked to have known better, and all at once, through the chance of circumstances, to find oneself borne toward that which one desired to see again. How many can say that this return has not proved more or less of a disenchantment? It is because the mirage of imagination is so powerful, that from a want of a point of comparison in the present, it makes the place seem more picturesque, the house larger, the people handsomer or more intelligent than they in truth are, and the reality appears very dim beside our dreams.

Démiane and Victor perceived, for the first time, what their former absence had previously prevented, the scarcity of the furniture, the disorder of the house, the servant-maids' effrontery, their mother's utter indifference, the severity of their father, who was sullen

always and sometimes unreasonable, and all these heretofore unobserved facts inspired the desire to ameliorate as much as possible the lives of these honest persons, which were full of wearing cares, due in great part to their poverty.

"André was quite right," said Victor one day to his brother, "the money our father sends us costs him very dear."

"Shall we go and speak to him about it at once?" asked Démiane, who was glad to see this idea fully accepted by his brother, who till then had only half adopted it.

They revealed their plan of reform to Father Kouzma, and the latter did not seem much surprised, which was a disappointment to our friends. When people are bound together by a noble thought, it is very hard to find themselves received coldly; a little sympathy would be so pleasant. But Father Kouzma did not appreciate the sacrifices his children were making. Owing to the false idea of the real value of money—which people have who supply almost all of their wants out of their land and who only possess ready money as a surplus to their revenue—the priest imagined that with forty roubles a month to spend his sons must roll in gold. He praised them, but without enthusiasm, and the two brothers left him rather down-hearted.

"I think," said Victor, "that we have made a useless sacrifice; they will not be grateful to us for it."

"I think as you do, that no one will be grateful to us," Démiane replied; "but look around us, our mother's dresses are old, the linen is wearing out—I assure you the sacrifice is not a useless one."

Victor thought of his sister's fine gown ; but he had made up his mind about affairs in that direction, and in his character of optimist, he soon decided about everything else.

After two weeks of *villegiatura*, our friends felt that it was time to return to Moscow. One sometimes has such intuitions : you are at a friend's or relative's house, everything seems to be passing in the most pleasant manner ; of a sudden a current of air which is colder than usual freezes you morally. The first day, you say to yourself : it is some door which they must have left open ; but the door does not close again, and then you feel the immediate necessity of returning to your own fireside.

To Father Kouzma's sons, the door was a veritable *porte-cochère*, and the current of air was a hurricane. They asked for their parents' blessings, which were given them, and for permission to depart, which was also not refused. The priest felt himself ill at ease in his sons' presence ; they had become too cityfied for him, too much above him ; Démiane especially had brought away from his visits to the Conservatoire a new elegance, which placed him on a social scale much nearer to the Roussofs than to his own family. The daily intimacy which put the young men on an equal footing with the lords of the village, made the old man feel how far his sons were gradually becoming separated from the paternal branch, and without being angry with them about it, he was not sorry to see them depart.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PRINCESS CLEOPATRE.

LIFE began again for the young men in the same way it passed the winter before, but with a great deal more work, and fewer comforts. Victor was at his musical-instrument maker's during the day and with Benjamin Roussot till nine o'clock in the evening; Démiane was at the Conservatoire in the morning, giving private lessons in the afternoon, and working away alone—as one possessed—on his violin, at night, while waiting for his brother.

André drew from them the confession of their disappointment at their father's house, and he listened with a benevolent smile to Victor's grievances.

“Did you imagine,” said he to him, “that they would be grateful to you for your generosity? A mistake, my good friend! I do not know why people talk of useless sacrifices! The very essence of sacrifice is to be useless; that is why, when one does such things, one must not clothe them with the name of sacrifices, because then one wishes gratitude in return, which is a perfectly ridiculous claim; one must give them their true name: duty! Under that appellation they require nothing from anybody, and one is very glad to have offered them to the world!”

This maxim was one of those which André put into practice, and our friends had occasion to notice it more

than once. They had some bitter moments to pass, but the merry trio endured the most trying days with the serenity of those of true metal.

Two years went by in this manner. Démiane made rapid progress; his professor made no more sport of him, and held him up as an example to the others when he was not present. However he did not wish to procure him many private lessons, which he might have done very easily. This eccentric man pretended that if to die of hunger was contrary to the development of an artist, that to feel from time to time a little cramp in one's stomach was a good stimulus to genius. Démiane reached the end of his second year of study without suspecting that he possessed an extraordinary talent.

A few days before the final examination, his professor, Verlomine, gave him one of his violins.

"You cannot play your fiddle at the examination," said he to him, "just try and see what you can do with this."

Démiane, with unbounded delight, familiarized himself with the new instrument for a week, and the day of the examination having arrived, he presented himself almost with boldness before the select public who attend these solemn, private exhibitions.

As he bowed to the chairs — those of the first row were not filled till late, and in spite of his fine self-possession, which was considerable for a *débutant*, but would not have been very great in any other person, our friend did not see any farther than the nearest chairs — a lady, the only one who occupied a seat in the first row, put her eye-glass deliberately on her

nose and stared at him as though he were the Apollo Belvidere—in marble—instead of D miane Markof in flesh and bones, and even in fluids more or less magnetic, some of which shone forth from his troubled eyes which seemed intoxicated with pride or joy.

He was intoxicated, in reality, intoxicated with his certain triumph, and with the future which he saw dawning, when he began V niavsky's *Polonaise*, the same which had won for him the distinction of being listened to by Verlomine. He felt himself young, full of defects and faults, overcharged with inexperience, and yet he believed he had only to strike the earth with his foot, like Ant us, to leap full of force into the arena of life, and to defy the proudest wrestlers.

He played with an animation which ten years later he would have considered in bad taste, and his face, that was mobile to excess, expressed a thousand different and confused sentiments. While a thrill of satisfaction ran through the audience, who were accustomed to hear performances of this kind, the lady let her eye-glass fall, but did not on account of this lower her gaze, and she examined the young violinist with her naked eye, with the same ease with which she had just done so under the shelter of her eye-glass; only, in order to see him the better, she slightly closed her right one, which by an anomaly was the weaker of the two.

A man of about fifty years of age, slender, distinguished looking, and a little worn, but still very handsome, slowly traversed the long row of chairs and went and seated himself by the lady in question, who bestowed a slight nod upon him, without disturbing herself in her contemplation.

"A pretty stroke of the bow, is it not, Princess?" said the new-comer in a low voice, with a careless tone. "He is a stranger; they have kept him under a bell till now; he is their best stroke, and I presume he is going to have the first prize. Look at the blooming faces of his judges, and he, the poor devil, does not seem to suspect the effect he is producing! That is what we diplomatists call 'the boldness of innocence.' You say nothing, Princess; do you not think he has talent? Your decrees are laws, you know! Do you wish to annul that of this areopagus? You can do so yourself, quite alone."

"He has talent," said the Princess, taking up her eye-glass.

"A little theatrical in his pose, eh?"

"He is handsome."

These three words produced a singular effect upon the diplomatist; he was slightly leaning on the arm of his chair and bending over towards the young woman; he drew himself up and rested naturally on the opposite arm, and spoke to her a little farther off, although in that diplomatic and restrained voice which understands so well how to make words distinct while rendering them audible to one alone.

"Yes, Princess, he is handsome, as handsome as Antinous; he is a young demi-god, and he has magnificent eyes. The woman who can put a gleam in those eyes, will perhaps discover a vein of gold. But there are so many precious metals that end in being only vulgar brass, decorated with the pompous name of some composition or other."

"It is by use that one perceives it when they have become old!" replied the Princess in a curt voice, and cruelly emphasizing the word *old*. But her adversary was not one of those whom a word can overthrow. He smiled and continued in the same tone:

"The Prince?"

"Thank you, *mon cher*, he is always the same. They have ordered him to the baths of the Caucasus."

"That is very far!"

"What does that matter? As well there as elsewhere."

"And then, the Caucasus is new to you, and you like novelty, do you not, Princess?"

She did not reply, and he continued as though by chance an interrupted conversation.

"Do you know that young man?"

The Princess made a negative sign with her head and began to close her right eye again.

"His name is Démiane Markof."

"How do you know it?" said she, turning round with a certain vivacity.

He presented her a programme, on which the name of Markof followed another that was well-known to all amateurs, from a number of concerts in which he had appeared, that were much patronized by one of the professors.

She took the programme and let it fall disdainfully, so that the light blue paper rolled to the foot of the platform, where it attracted Markof's attention.

"Démiane! It is a name of the clergy," said she almost out loud.

The young musician was recovering his breath just then, during an interval of silence; his eyes attracted by the paper were lifted to the young woman's face.

"Bravo!" said the diplomatist in a low voice, as he applauded noiselessly with the tips of his fingers, while fastening his slightly ironical look on the performer. The Princess noticed the movement and comprehended its intention. She trembled and leaned forward.

"Bravo!" she cried in a loud voice, applauding so enthusiastically with her nervous hands that she tore her gloves.

The whole audience, according to the immemorial and sheep-like custom of all audiences, applauded with frenzy.

Pale and dazzled, nearly staggering under the weight of an emotion which he had never before experienced, Démiane bowed; but his look met the Princess' eyes, who was still applauding, and it was to her that he addressed his *débutant's* bow, which was awkward, timid and charming.

He continued at once with fresh inspiration. The inflections which he had conscientiously practised with his professor were mingled with the fire of a new impetuosity, and he played the finale of the piece as no one perhaps had ever played it before, but contrary to the traditional rules.

"You are making him lose his first prize, Princess," said the diplomatist to his beautiful neighbor. "You owe him a compensation."

She cast a half flattered, half disdainful glance on the indiscreet talker, and ceased looking at the *débutant*.

Vainly he endeavored to encounter again those

powerful eyes that so many others had questioned before him; the Princess, who was impassive, did not bestow the slightest glance upon him, so long as he had to undergo other trials, and D miane, became master of himself again, and finished in the most brilliant manner. In fine, he was awarded the first prize; and the Princess, who only waited for this to leave, rose and stood for a moment offering herself to the young man's eyes, which instinctively sought her, and he read in her face a thousand feelings: encouragement for the artist, a little disdainful sympathy, and admiration for his physical beauty, so much in fact that he could not decipher all in so short a time; and then she turned her back upon him slowly, and reached the door of exit while the other names vainly struck the ear of the handsome, indifferent woman.

"It was for me that she remained!" thought he, blushing more at the boldness of his thought than with joy at his first prize.

"She thinks she has found a mine of virgin gold!" thought the diplomatist, scrutinizing D miane's face, "and perhaps she is going to dig a bottomless abyss in it."

"You did not see me then, brother?" said Victor to D miane a few moments later, when outside at the door, he was able to cling to his arm. "When they proclaimed your name my neck was stretched towards you, and it seemed to me that my face was going to reach your cheek to kiss you."

"I did not see you," said D miane, a little ashamed at remembering that at that moment he was looking at the Princess, a woman of whom he knew nothing.

CHAPTER XXII.

A RUSSIAN VIOLIN.

“**D**EMIANE MARKOF, who received the first violin prize of the Conservatoire, will have the honor of giving a Concert in the Hall of the *Petite Assemblée de la Noblesse*, on Wednesday, the 20th of May, 186—, at eight o’clock in the evening.”

This advertisement, which was placarded everywhere, would not have attracted a sufficient number of hearers if Madame Roussof and the Professor Veromine had not sold tickets for it with remarkable energy, especially at that season of the year when the amateur musical public emigrates in large bodies to the interior of the country. It was, perhaps, because this concert would be the last one, perhaps also, because until then, they had not made much noise about Markof, that when the young man appeared upon the platform, the hall was almost full. Instinctively he cast a glance on the first row of chairs; he saw there people of all kinds, young, old, ugly and handsome,—though there were few of the latter,—but not the smallest curl of hair that could recall to him the lady whose eyes had so interrogated him at the Conservatoire. As he was finishing his examination, a little disappointed, he perceived the keen, ironical face of the diplomatist, who smiled almost imperceptibly. This smile completely disconcerted the poor fellow, and

his first piece betrayed the reflection of his inward motion; they said to themselves, in different places in the hall, "that these gentlemen of the Conservatoire never do anything else! They spare no efforts, in order to bestow upon the public some dry fruit, about which they are crazy!"

While a well known pianist executed the *Rhapsodie Tongroise*, and made enough noise to overpower that of an earthquake, Verlomine attacked Démiane in the artists' room.

"Unlucky fellow!" said he to him, "you are turning us into ridicule. You are betraying the moral engagement which you have contracted with us! You are playing like the orchestra-leader of a drinking-bloon! What are you thinking of? Can you notouse yourself?"

"I am afraid," said Démiane, dispirited.

"That is not true! You are not afraid! You were not afraid when you went in! You were not afraid the other day at the examination!"

"I am sad," said Démiane, who was incapable of telling a falsehood, incapable also, of checking the bitterness that rose from his heart to his lips. She ought to have been there, that woman! She ought to have been! She certainly knew that he was going to play, why did she not come? But it was impossible to be ascertained.

"You are sad? Because you are going to earn a pile of money as big as yourself? A receipt of two thousand roubles and all the expenses paid; and the man is not happy? No poetry, I beg of you! No melan-

choly either. I detest affectation. Go in and try to show some nerve."

Démiane, thus encouraged, went to the hall; his entrance was not a brilliant one, as he had disappointed the public, and the most indulgent people, even those who talked of "the unavoidable embarrassment of a first *début*," did not dare to applaud too much. He advanced, resigned to everything, even to a complete failure, which would have annihilated the hopes he had cherished for so many years. He was in the state of mind of a man who sees a railway train coming upon him, and who cannot leave the track, held there by terror, and paralyzed at the sight of an imminent catastrophe.

"Strike *la*, if you please," said he to the accompanist.

The latter gave the required note, though surprised that Démiane had not taken the precaution to tune his violin before entering. The young man made the string resound in his ear, in order to gain a little time. Suddenly his face lit up, and a new strength and triumphant joy pervaded all his being: the unknown lady of the Conservatoire advanced slowly towards the platform. With head erect and slightly thrown backwards, the features of her face expressed nothing but the satisfaction of pride, and the assurance of disdain; she drew after her the folds of a superb dress, and walked quite alone, as if to assert her indifference to the world. She went straight to her chair near the diplomatist, and sank into it without having cast a look around her.

Démiane placed his bow on the strings, and a thrilling joy, an intense vibration passed from the violin into

all his being, even to the ends of his hair, that stood slightly erect, influenced by a current of electricity. Immediately the bow sang divinely, as though borne away on invisible wings, and the young man while performing a classical sonata for the majority of his auditors, made the practised ears of some among them listen to a magnificent hymn to love and youth.

She did not look at him ; with her head bent down, she was playing with the tassel of her fan, and seemed as indifferent to the music as to the audience, but what did that matter to Démiane ? The mysterious protector, the good fairy who had made him win his first prize had come, — come for him this time, because his name had caught her eye on the advertisement ; — was that not enough for his pride and his happiness ?

Démiane stopped, the *allegro* was finished. They applauded him with frenzy, as that good Russian public, which is the most enthusiastic and the best knows how to applaud. He bowed as he poised his bow to attack the *andante*. She gently raised her proud head and fastened on him a thoughtful and penetrating look, which made him thrill from his head to his feet.

For her, he made the instrument sing like a human voice ; it was the sonorous wood that was bidden to express to her all the caresses of a virgin heart, which was suddenly opened to the most intoxicating, the most spiritual love, that of an immortal being for an unapproachable star, a love that is all the madder because it does not fear to wound its object ; for it is placed so high that nothing can reach it.

“Do you wish to bewitch him then ?” Count Raben

asked his lovely neighbor, who began to play with her fan again.

"That does not concern you," she replied, without looking at him.

"Does that young adept of the fiddle really please you?"

She shrugged her shoulders a little, and the fringe of her burnous fell on the diplomatist's arm.

"Have you read *Dalila*, Princess?" continued the latter without moving.

"*Dalila*? I think I have. Well?"

"Do you remember Roswein? Do not ruin this superb lily in its bloom, which has no intention of spinning and which nevertheless wishes to be superbly clothed, like all lilies."

"And you, you make me rather think of Carnioli," said the Princess, with an accent of such concentrated anger that it made the words seem like a blow.

Count Raben bowed slightly. "Coming from a lady, from you, Princess, a cutting word is only flattery to him who receives it. When one has to fight with such an adversary as yourself, it is an honor to be pricked."

"Leave me alone!" returned the Princess in a bad temper.

The *andante* slowly unrolled its passionate changes; it went and returned on itself, disclosing the theme of a closer and closer embrace; at length the *motif* ascended to Heaven, while Démiane, who was transported far above the world, put all his soul in it to lay it at the feet of his unknown one.

"Thank him then!" said Raben, with his sarcastic smile, "you surely owe it to him!"

"Do you defy me to do it?" said the Princess; and with a splendidly insolent gesture, she lifted the drapery that hid her gloved hands and raising them slightly, applauded without making a sound, but in the most demonstrative manner.

"That is not enough," said Raben.

"Agreed," said she haughtily. And as Démiane, while bowing to the public, bent towards her a supplicating look, she distinctly, although in a low voice, pronounced the word: Thanks.

"Then, it is decided, you are going to take upon yourself the task of rendering him immortal?" said Raben to his beautiful enemy, while she turned on him a look of defiance.

"It is not yourself who will ever be immortal!" she said to him ironically.

"Because you do not wish it," he replied with perfect gallantry.

"Oh! *mon cher*, he is not immortal who wishes to be so. One must first have genius!"

All this took place in the most courteous manner, in a low tone, without gestures, but with their shadows, with mere suggestions of movements, as it should be between people in the best society, in which the least gesture presumes self importance. They exchanged these words which were as sharp as swords, and no one behind them suspected them. Démiane who had become pale, looked at them anxiously, divining that what they were talking about concerned him. She looked at

him—the look did not last even as long as a flash of lightning, so rapidly did it glide between the young woman's lowered eye-lids,—but he gained renewed courage from it and finished the sonata with a fire that won the approval of the most unwilling. Recalled three times, he returned to bow to the public his master, who, for the moment asked nothing better than to become his slave; then he retired to the artist's room, where he was loaded with praise from those whom, a half an hour before had so roughly attacked him. He listened to them mechanically, smiling, thanking and shaking hands to the right and left, and only hearing in reality one word, that *thanks* which his eyes had divined from the movement of the Princess' lips, but of which his ear had not caught the sound.

“The Princess Rédine looks at you admiringly!” said Verlomine unceremoniously, almost aloud. “She will make your reputation, provided you are amiable to her, to her dog, to her maid, and even to her husband.”

“Is she married?” asked Démiane who, of all this speech, had only heard the young woman's name, and the word “husband.”

“At thirty-five years of age, if she were not, she would have but little chance of ever being!”

“Thirty-five years old? Who is thirty-five years old?” said the young man, thinking he made a mistake.

“The lady seated there, in the corner to the right; by leaning forward a little, you can see her from here, with pearls around her neck, and the handsome Raben at her side.”

It was she! With what irreverence these scoundrels treated her!

Much shocked, Démiane was going to utter some absurd protestation; but Verlomine prevented him:

“She will tell you that she is only twenty-eight, and that will be very nice of her, for she does not seem to be more than twenty-seven. Be amiable to her husband, for that is an essential condition.”

“Does she love him very much?” said Démiane with a vague heartache.

A smile dawned on the caustic professor’s lips.

“That does not concern either one or the other of us, my dear child. However that may be, contrary to the majority of women,—of women of her kind,—she shows the old Prince a regard that is quite touching and thus gives tone to her surroundings. It is an excellent example, and one that shows the most critical taste, and is the proof of a very rare intelligence.”

“Is the Prince old?” asked Démiane, who was listening without understanding, or rather, without wishing to understand.

“He is sixty-eight years old; he was wounded in the head in 1855, and his intelligence was rather seriously impaired by it; but the admirable care which his wife lavishes on him, cannot fail to preserve to him for a long time the little brightness which Providence has left him.”

Démiane looked at the professor: the latter was imperturbable: no one had ever been able to discover whether he was joking or not, when he was determined

to appear serious: moreover, the poor fellow had many other things in his mind, and hastened in pursuit of an artist, who was making preparations to leave, pretending he would not have time to undertake his part at the rate the concert was going on, and that he was expected at a soirée where he had promised to play. With a great deal of persuasion, Markof succeeded in inducing him to remain, on condition that he should play next. This arrangement interfered with all the closing pieces of the concert, but Mademoiselle K—— had not come, and in some way or other, it was necessary to fill up the void, without giving the audience cause to complain.

“What an undertaking, *mon Dieu!* what an undertaking it is to give a concert! sighed D miane, when the difficulties were smoothed over.

“You complain! We have done the most difficult part for you!” replied Verlomine. “You will see what it will be when you are quite alone!” Generally, my friend, when every thing is made ready, when the hall is lighted, when the public has come and the artists are late, the king of the feast is overcome with a frightful headache, and has no other thought except to go home and go to bed.”

When D miane returned to the hall, the Princess was gone! It seemed to the poor youth that all the lights had simultaneously gone out, and that the world was bounding through space, in the blackest darkness. He nerved himself, nevertheless, to meet this unexpected blow; the young woman’s manner inspired him with the conviction that he would see her again, and

this conviction gave him the courage to accomplish the rest of his task without too much weariness.

When all was over, when he had received every one's congratulations, and given fees to an incalculable number of dirty hands, which seemed to multiply themselves in an inordinate manner, Démiane found himself in the street with Victor, who during all the evening had neither made a movement nor spoken a word. Hidden on a sofa, behind a great heap of neck handkerchiefs and great-coats, he contented himself with watching his brother, with the submissive and happy eyes of a dog who contemplates his master.

"Ah!" said Démiane, "I am worn out! I would like to lie down there, on the pavement, and sleep until mid-day to-morrow."

"Let us go home," said Victor joyfully, taking him by the arm; "let us go home as quickly as possible; give me the violin, I will carry it."

Démiane allowed himself to be led; they got into a drosky and went jolting through the badly paved streets of old Moscow, then through those of new Moscow, which are equally bad. Above their heads, the greyish azure of the northern summer nights was studded with the feeble light of the stars. It was these northern nights which the poet must have had in mind, when he said:

*"Et l'aube douce et pâle, en attendant son heure
Semble toute la nuit errer au bas du ciel."*

For in truth, near the horizon, do the gilded, mysterious lights float which proclaim the setting sun, or the

approaching dawn, and which make one dream of a thousand things, and cause a thousand dwindled hopes. These nights banish the mirage of the past, and are overflowing with thoughts of the future.

The day was not far distant,—it comes very early at that period of the year!—the east was already growing bright when the two brothers alighted before their small house. A light shone in André's window, the only one that they had seen for a long while during their passage through the sleeping streets, where in summer the gas is never burning.

“André has not gone to bed,” said Démiane, yawning.

“He wishes to know how the concert has succeeded,” Victor replied with an expression of strange delight.

The drosky went away slowly, and our friends entered their home. André was awaiting them in their own room, with a candle in his hand.

“Well!” said he laconically.

“Superb!” replied Victor, who seemed to have regained his speech, in proportion as his brother lost his.

“I congratulate you!” said André, energetically shaking the artist's hand.

“I thank you, but I am nearly dead!” said Démiane, who in truth was staggering from fatigue and sleeplessness.

He was going to throw himself on his bed, all dressed; the two young men stopped him with a gesture of alarm.

“So much the worse for my fine new dress-coat!”

said Démiane, wishing to resist them. "I have been on my feet for ten hours, I must stretch myself out."

"It is not that," said Victor, still wearing his triumphant smile; "there is something on your bed."

He raised a napkin, and Démiane perceived lying in his place, with its head on the pillow, the well-known form of a violin-case.

"What is that?" said he, awakened by the strangeness of the sight. Cases for stringed instruments have a vague resemblance to a little coffin.

"Look!" said Ladof. Victor held his breath.

Démiane put out his hand carefully, touched the object and drew the case towards him; it was heavy; he carried it to the small, old piano, opened it, and stood motionless.

In its red cloth case, which was carefully padded, a superb violin reposed on its back; the ebony bow had its place in the lid, and Démiane's initials were visible on both.

"What is it?" said he recovering his breath.

"It is for you, brother; it is your violin!" exclaimed Victor, incapable of containing himself; "it is your own violin, with which you will become celebrated!"

Excitedly and without replying Démiane seized the instrument, mechanically tuned two strings, and drew the bow slowly twice over the same note, which gave forth a deep, full, sweet and vibrating sound, like the most beautiful tenor voice.

"It is good, I will answer for it!" said Ladof, who had been mute till then.

Démiane replaced the violin, looked at it, then looked at his friends.

“I do not understand,” said he. “That violin must have cost a fearful price.”

“It is very simple, however!” said Ladof, with his usual calmness. “You had not the wherewithal to buy a Stradivarius, nor I to make you a present of one, so your brother made you a Markof! That is all.

“It was you, Victor, who made this!” said Démiane, pale with emotion, for he began to understand.

“André helped me a great deal!” modestly replied Victor, who had become the color of a wild rose, and as small as a little mouse in his great humility.

“With my advice,” said Ladof, correcting him.

Démiane remained silent, then his face was covered quickly with tears; he hid it at first in his hands, but laying aside all false pride, he let it be seen without any shame, and held out a hand to each of them:

“Oh! my friends!” said he, “my friends!”

He could find nothing else to say to them, and what could he have added to that cry of the soul? Were they not indeed his friends?

“We have worked at it for a long time,” said Victor; “the case has been made for fifteen months; it was seasoned for a year, and it took us three months to finish it. And, Démiane, do you know, I had an idea, but I did not understand it —”

“I understood it though, very clearly,” interrupted André. “We have violinists, but we have no violins! All our instruments are made by Germans, and it has

vexed me for a long while! But, as to myself, I have no ambition; some day I will go and eat my buffaloes on the banks of the Don, and I will make no more violins except for my children if I have any, for the children of other folks, if I do not marry. Victor is consumed by ambition! Just as you see him there, he has more ambition in his small form than you, my great Démiane, in all your endless body. He saw in his dreams German violins and Nuremberg altos sitting on his stomach and lolling their tongues at him, which gave him the most frightful nightmares! So, he wished to make a Russian violin, Russian in every part, and I think he has succeeded."

Démiane took up the violin again and played the first thirty measures of the *allegro* of the sonata.

"It is a pearl!" exclaimed he, "without a fault! oh! Victor, you are worth a thousand times more than myself!"

Victor smiled; his joy was diffused around him, he looked as though he were being borne on a shield of roses.

"For a Russian artist," said he, "a Russian violin was necessary. We have the artist and the instrument. *Vive!* our Russia! *Vive!* our country! Hurrah!"

The old house trembled under the joyful cry of our friends, and they heard the proprietress in the garret, who slept soundly, turn herself over and moan, thinking doubtless that it was thundering.

"Let us go to bed," said André, blowing out his candle; "it is broad day-light."

An hour later, Victor waking suddenly, perceived

his brother's opened eyes; he had retired but he was lying very wide awake, and was attentively looking at the violin case, which was placed opposite to him.

"Are you not sleeping?" said he to him; "you were so tired?"

"I am not tired any longer, brother," said Démiane, in a sweet voice, as though in a dream; "life is pleasant and I am happy."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MESSAGE.

THE next day, about one o'clock in the afternoon, as the two brothers were finishing their tea, a tall fellow with an important air appeared on the horizon of the square. After having rung at two or three houses which presented a better appearance, he decided at last to approach the small, old building; the proprietress' name, however, was plainly written on the letter which he held in his hand, and he had seen it as he passed above the door; but this man, who was imbued with aristocratic notions, preferred to take several useless steps rather than to incur the possibility of contaminating the feet of his noble *valet de chambre* on the threshold of so wretched a dwelling; no one whom his masters deigned to honor with a missive could, or should dwell in so poor a house. Obligated, however, to yield to evidence, he rang with a firm hand and, at the stroke, Petit-Gris, who was alarmed, took flight across the table, in a way that seriously endangered the equilibrium of the tea-pot on the samovar. The proprietress descended the wooden stairway with a haste which was none the less characteristic, opened the door, and entered into conversation with the magnificent messenger, who retired shortly with a majestic step.

"A letter for Monsieur Markof, from the Princess Rédine; there is no answer," said the good woman as she withdrew.

Monsieur Markof could only be Démiane. He extended his arm and opened the envelope without Victor's having any thought of claiming it.

"Who is the Princess Rédine?" innocently asked the good youth, "and what can she want of you?"

"Some work for next winter," replied Démiane, laying on the table the thick, heavy, unpolished English paper, whose folds had resisted the pressure of the envelope, and opened of themselves.

"Some lessons?"

"No, not exactly, some accompaniments, if you like that better. It is to play sonatas for the violin and piano."

"Next winter, that is far away!" said Victor, who would have preferred to have them begin at once.

"Yes, it is far away!" repeated Démiane, with a sigh.

"A Princess! show me her handwriting." He seized the letter, not without a slight movement on his brother's part, indicating his desire to keep it to himself; but Victor paid no attention to it, and read aloud in Russ:

"The Princess Cléopâtre Rédine, who is just leaving for the baths of Piatigorsk, begs Monsieur Markof to reserve her some hours for next winter, so that they can play some music together. The Princess intends returning near the month of November!" The address followed.

"The month of November!" exclaimed Victor.

"The Greek Kalends!" said Ladof from the threshold of the door; he was not going to work, having reserved himself a holiday to pass with his friends.

“No,” replied Démiane firmly, while his eyes shone with a strange fire, that was half wrathful, half triumphant, “it is serious.”

“What do you know about it?”

“I like her; she was at the concert yesterday, she was at the Conservatoire.” He stopped and bit his tongue; what more could he say?

“A patron, then? It is perfect. Is she young or old?”

“Young,” replied Démiane, reluctantly.

“Handsome or ugly?”

“Handsome, so it seems to me.”

“Hurrah! for beauty!” said Ladof coldly, which contrasted strongly with his enthusiastic words.

“And she lives?——”

Victor read the address again.

“My good fellow,” said Ladof, still coldly, “your fortune is made.”

“Eh?” said Démiane, straightening himself as though he had received a blow from a whip.

“A young and beautiful Princess, who patronizes the arts, and who makes a *rendezvous* for six months ahead, cannot fail to have the most generous intentions in regard to you.”

“Do you know her?” asked the young artist, instinctively wounded at André’s tone.

“By reputation.”

“Well, what? What is there to say about it?” continued Démiane, a little bitterly.

“Nothing at all! From my point of view, nothing at all. When one is rich and powerful, one does as one pleases; truth to say, that is the principal value of riches and of power.”

Démiane had arisen and was walking up and down the room, at the risk of knocking against the table and of treading on Petit-Gris' agitated tail, who looked at him displeased.

"How singular," said he, after having taken two or three turns, "is that desire of disparaging people whom one does not know! It is sufficient that a woman should be amiable and rich for calumny at once to attack her——"

Ladof put his hand on the artist's arm and stopped him short in his speech as well as in his walk.

"Do you know her then, so well?" said he, tranquilly, "that you talk about calumny?"

"I? Not at all!"

"You do not know her at all, and here for this woman whom you do not know, whom you have seen twice, you accuse your friend of several years standing, with calumniating—your friend who has shared with your brother the right of loving, of encouraging, and of advising you——"

Démiane shook off the hand that held his arm, and tried to turn away.

"You will not make me angry," said Ladof, who was still calm. "I tell you that you treat me like a troublesome person, like a tutor, like an old imbecile, and this, for a woman whom you do not know; she looked into your eyes, did she not? and you have lost your head? Well! go, my friend, go where destiny impels you! After all, perhaps destiny does not trouble itself about you. That woman is clever, and she is going away. When she returns, you will have another one in your head!"

He laughed softly, with his peaceful laugh which denoted such a perfect self-possession, and it calmed Démiane's irritation.

It had often resounded in their æsthetical, political and other discussions, this laugh of a man who knows life and who understands how to excuse all weaknesses. André had laughed at his Utopian dreams and at himself, with the same simplicity with which he laughed at others on certain occasions. All Victor's great plans, all Démiane's poetical chimeras, were welcomed with this kind laugh, and they had always joined in it, irresistibly won over by his frankness and his good nature.

The effect this time was the same. Démiane held out his hand to Ladof and said to him :

"I am a fool!"

"Certainly you are," replied the young man, "but I must confess, it requires a certain dose of good sense to recognize it. Beware of Undines, my friend, beware of protecting fairies — Carolines are much less dangerous — to speak the truth they are not dangerous at all: a woman who smells of onions, and who puts rose pomade on her hair, can only be dangerous to a boot-maker's apprentice. Victor, could you imagine a boot-maker's apprentice infringing on his patron's money-box to carry off a Caroline?"

"I do not know any Caroline," said Victor, naïvely.

"Your brother knew one."

"Will you be silent?" said Démiane. "You will shock my house-maid."

"Oh! for my part," said Victor, "I am never shocked at anything. Youth must have its day!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

A WANDERING MOOD.

“**W**HAT are you going to do now, my two nabobs?” said Monsieur Roussof to the young men when they went to pay him a visit, two days after the concert.

“I have an idea,” said Démiane with hesitation, as he looked at his brother from the corner of his eye, “so has Victor ——”

“Two ideas!”

“No, the same one; if we remain in Moscow, we shall spend all our money.”

Monsieur Roussof made a sign which signified that he did not doubt it.

“So, like other artists, we thought of making a little tour in the provinces; it seems to me that a first prize-man of the Conservatoire has a chance of earning a little money everywhere; if it should only pay our expenses, it would be quite sufficient.”

“And then it will permit us to see the country,” urged Victor, with the earnest air that he always assumed every time he expressed his brother’s thoughts; he was less bold in announcing his own.

“Wisely considered!” said Monsieur Roussof, “and well; in what direction will you go?”

Démiane blushed; he had not yet studied diplomacy.

“They say,” he replied, “that along the Volga, one

finds a great many cities where music is held in great honor; I would like to begin at Nijni."

"Well, and how far will you go?"

"As far as the earth will take us!" said Victor joyfully.

"Go, then! that is very well."

Monsieur Roussof's scrutinizing look embarrassed Démiane; it seemed to him that his protector must know the reason of his preference for the Volga. Was not that river the natural way to the Caucasus? was it not permitted to hope that from port to port, he would reach Bakoun, and from thence Piatigorsk, without any one's being able to suspect what urged him to the mountains? For a moment our friend felt sure that Monsieur Roussof had divined something, for he smiled as he said to him:

"Do you go alone?"

"We two!" replied Victor, who was surprised.

"Of course. And who is going to accompany Démiane on the piano?"

"We will leave that to Providence!" answered Démiane, who was relieved from a great weight, on seeing that his machiavellism had not been transparent.

"One can find accompanists everywhere."

"Bad and good ones," said Monsieur Roussof. "Do you not take any one with you? A skillful songstress, a clever pianist? Generally artists travel in a troupe."

"We have no friends," said Démiane, indifferently; "we are Bohemians, free under the heavens, without any shackles, and without any obligations to any one but ourselves—and yourself," added he, bowing to

Monsieur Roussof. "Before leaving, sir, I have brought you back the fifty roubles, which enabled us, three years ago, to come to Moscow, and to reach the position I have now attained. I owe my fortune to you, I will remember it, Monsieur Roussof, and I shall never be quits with you."

He laid the bank-bill on the table with a slight trembling, which he could not master, and his eyes sought those of the good man.

"Do you insist on returning this money to me? You do not wish to have any benefactors?" said the latter, smiling.

"It is not that, sir; gratitude is sweet to me, but I told you I would pay it back, and my word is as good as my bond."

"You told me that also, my friend, I remember it; very well, you are an honest fellow. And your money, are you going to take it with you?"

"I shall have a thousand roubles left, which I would like to ask you to keep, sir. I am afraid I should not stop spending them in time, if I took them away with me, and I would like to find them on my return—"

"I ask nothing better than to be your banker. Here, or at Gradovka, you will always find me ready for any demand."

The two brothers took leave of their friend. When they left him, Monsieur Roussof pointed with his finger in the direction of the door:

"A knight, but a man of business — there is in you, my friend Démiane, a curious mixture of the hidalgo and the book-keeper — which will prevail in you?"

Will there be a struggle, or will the two elements lead you gently to the grave, without leaving you? He is running after a petticoat, that is written on his face. I would like to know if he will end by catching it?"

In truth, D miane had run a great deal, not after a single petticoat, but after the starched and lace-trimmed collection of the Princess' petticoats, which were wrapped in silk-paper, and laid at their full length in enormous trunks, that kind of trunks which the Trouville railway unwisely refuses to accept as luggage, because they cannot go in the railway wagons. He learned that those fortunate petticoats were going very slowly by water, — which is not a hurried mode of transit — to rejoin their mistress at Astrakhan, from there to Bakoun, from there to Tiflis, and from Tiflis to Piatigorsk, which place one can reach by land, which is the most speedy way of travelling.

The Princess left Moscow the morning of the very day on which D miane had announced his plan to Monsieur Roussouf, and accompanied by her husband, in a berlin, by her maid and by a second maid. A third, who was especially attached to the service of her petticoats, followed them on their navigation of the Volga with two *valets-de-pied*, the Prince's first *valet-de-chambre*, and the Prince's second *valet-de-chambre*, who, to speak the truth, waited chiefly on the first one; by Pouf, the Prince's King Charles, by Frisette, the Prince's grey-hound, with a woman attached to their service. The cook with his two aids, the major-domo with his secretary, whose duty was to write the bills-of-fare on a plain, pale-green bristol card intended for the

Princess' use, had left under another convoy, and as to the rest of the servants, they hoped to find all that might be wanting where they were going.

Draped, not in a wall-colored mantle, but in a pretty sand-tinted gray overcoat, which was then the fashion, Démiane saw all the carriages leave; he had not perceived the Princess, not knowing where to look for her, in that Babel of equipages and horses, but she had seen him very plainly, and had taken great care not to let him suspect it.

When the autumn comes, when the moment has arrived for stripping the orchards for fear the rains and the first frosts may spoil the most beautiful fruit, careful amateurs do not trust any one with the task of picking the finest pears from their favorite trees. Some are good to be eaten at once, others will be ripe in a week's time, others again will only reveal their flavor at the New Year; the *connoisseur* finds one, the most beautiful of all, smells it, turns it around and says to himself: This one can wait; it will only gain by passing the winter on a shelf in the fruit closet; in March it will hardly have reached the degree of maturity necessary to give it perfect flavor and perfect fragrance. After having assured herself that he would not fail her, and being certain of holding him by a solid thread, the Princess had put Démiane on the highest shelf of her fruit closet.

The imprudent fellow did not suspect that by pursuing his fairy, he ran the risk of breaking the pretty network of the virgin's threads with which fairies love to surround themselves; the magician herself had not

foreseen so admirable and especially so wandering a zeal. Fortunately she knew nothing about it, and the evil that one is ignorant of does not exist, at least, so long as one is ignorant of it. Démiane, moreover, had no very decided purpose in his mind, in starting thus in search of the Princess. He vaguely felt an encouragement in the indication she had given him about Piatigorsk; he said to himself that she would not so clearly have pointed out that place if she had not thought that he might join her there; but the Caucasus was very far away, and the bathing season very short. What did that matter? Démiane was young, ambitious and impatient, and he would be better off no matter where than at Moscow to await what destiny promised him.

CHAPTER XXV.

JAROSLAV.

THE view of Jaroslav is one of the most beautiful in Russia when not seen from the land route—from that side it resembles an infinite number of others—but from the Volga, with its high crenated ramparts, its churches with gilded cupolas, and with its verdant cliffs that extend above the city, it is difficult at first sight to imagine any place brighter or more peculiar.

“They ought to love music here!” exclaimed Démi-ane, who, on the evening of his arrival was standing on the rampart heights, gazing at the river, which was covered with white and red sails, and enlivened by ferry-boats which transported from one bank to the other animals, carriages, carts, and even simple pedestrians. Groups of peasant women, the young ones wearing on their heads the *kakochnik* made of materials covered with gilt spangles, the old ones with their heads wrapped in linen cloths, like the Holy Women in Italian pictures; children wearing light-colored shirts; men standing proudly erect with their legs encased in felt, which was bound around them by cords made of bark, and who wore antique red felt caps on their chestnut curls, grouped themselves on the square ferry-boats, which were pushed along by robust boatmen, who sometimes used a pole, and sometimes oars. They

exchanged calls and rallying cries together, the horses neighed scraping the sonorous boards with their hoofs, the sheep baa-ed, pressing with fright close to each other, and over all the beautiful seven o'clock sun threw its golden red rays in torrents, which gave in the distance, to the long pieces of fine linen which were spread out to bleach in the meadows, the appearance of oriflambs lighted up by the gleam of battles.

"It is a rich country," replied Victor, who was less enthusiastic and more positive. "Life looks as though it were easy here and money does not seem to be scarce."

In truth, in all the *traktirs*, in all the inns, could be heard songs and laughter: a troupe of *Tziganes* were sounding their tambourines in the large hall of the principal hotel, and every one seemed to take pleasure in listening to their refrains and odd melodies. In a drinking-shop, two handsome fellows from the banks of the Volga were dancing a wild *trépaka*, striking the earth with their heels, leaping and jumping, then continuing to dance almost on a level with the ground, with their legs bent under them, in a position which defied all the laws of equilibrium.

"What a pity," said Démiane smiling, "that my new dignity prevents my doing as they do! It seems to me that I could dance for an hour at least with pleasure."

"In so joyous a city, there must be always a ball somewhere," suggested Victor.

"Ah! my friend, the fine *Gesellschaft* days are over! A prizeman of the Conservatoire should show himself only in a dress-coat and white gloves!"

They went to bed without dancing, but not without music, for, leaning on the terrace that crowns the proud girdle of ramparts, which are useless at the present time, they listened far into the warm, pale night to the chorus of boatmen who descended the stream, letting themselves be cradled by the old four-part songs for male voices, whose origin is unknown and which make one think of the land of dreams.

The next day the two brothers made their official visits, and learned that nothing was easier than to give a concert; at Jaroslav every one was bent on amusing himself. A concert is not more tiresome than anything else, especially if it be taken as a pretext for displaying a pretty toilette, or for staying away from one's business office. One difficulty arose; the usual accompanist at concerts was in bed, very ill, and he would not be in a fit state to present himself to the public for a month, should that happiness ever be granted him again in this world.

"What is the matter with him, the poor devil?" Démiane asked a young music-loving scribe who confided this to him in a room in the Town Hall.

The other raised his arm towards Heaven, and carried his half-closed hand to his lips. In all spoken languages or in pantomime this gesture has the same signification.

"He drinks? That does not make one ill a month!"

"He has been drinking," replied the young man; "to speak the truth, he is at the hospital with *delirium tremens*, but don't go and tell that in other cities."

"Never fear," replied Démiane, "I will be dumb,

especially because I do not believe that Jaroslav enjoys supremacy in that kind of thing; there must be musicians everywhere who love to crook their elbows. But tell me, what do they do when this interesting fellow is at the hospital, and they wish to give a concert?"

"They are very much embarrassed! The ladies of the city show great willingness regarding it; several among them are very good musicians, and kindly accompany amateurs, but for a stranger ——"

"I will be presented!" said Démiane, who was discouraged at nothing. "We are well brought up, and then I have some letters of introduction."

They examined the letters. One of them gave them access to a gouty General, who played the clarionette to perfection. His wife was coquettish and grumbling, which is not so rare as one might suppose; her daughter was ugly, and still more coquettish, but less grumbling.

"That is all the same to me," said our friend; "I have not come here to get married or to make a collection of inflamed hearts. Can I find through these persons some one to accompany me?"

"There is a friend of the daughter who does not play badly; she accompanies very well indeed, but she has never played in public; I do not know whether she would be willing to risk it."

"Bah!" said Démiane, "with a man who has received a first prize for the violin!"

They went to the gouty General's, who was delighted to see a musician of merit who was patented by the Conservatoire.

"We will play my duo for the clarionette and violin," said he; "I rarely find an occasion for doing so. The gentlemen of this city think it too difficult, and I will get you an audience that will be as large as it will be amiable, all my wife's daughters' friends—and all the ladies of the city are their friends—eh, Penguin!"

Penguin appeared in the shape of an old man with gray hair, who was thick-set and grum-looking, clad in mouse-colored gray, and who had moustaches besmeared with tobacco, and who carried one arm behind his back; the other hung at his side, and both were so short that they scarcely reached his pockets.

"You see what short arms he has," said the General, "that is why I call him Penguin."

"Penguin! go and tell Madame la Générale that we have a first-prize man of the violin from Moscow here for a concert; tell her to come immediately."

The person thus directed grumbled a sort of assent and disappeared. They heard from behind the door a prolonged sound of altercation, in which Penguin's hoarse voice returned like a theme in a sonata with these words: "The General commands it."

"Perhaps it disturbs your wife?" said Démiane, politely.

The music-loving functionary, whose calmness was disturbed by nothing, waved his hand to indicate that that was not of the slightest importance.

"Don't pay any attention to it," said the General, "she always acts like that."

Victor thought that with such a home the General was doubly unhappy in having the gout; but just as he

was giving his brother an expressive glance, *la Générale* appeared, wearing a cap trimmed with straw-colored ribbons and a brooch in triptych-form representing her husband, her daughter and her son, who was at that time serving under the flag; these last two were represented as very young and with crooked mouths; but the painter was alone to blame for this defect, which exposed the poor children to unkind remarks from those who had never seen them.

On perceiving Victor, Madame la Générale's grumbling nature caused her to make a slight grimace; but the sight of Démiane stimulated the coquettish element, and the grimace resolved into a smile which did not gain much in the transformation.

"What is it?" she asked.

"These gentlemen wish to give us a concert; Verlomine sent them to me—"

"I was not sent," said Victor, who was always honest and scrupulous.

"That makes no difference," continued the General; "I will play my duet." La Générale visibly shrugged her shoulders;—"Madame Bradof might sing a song, and Visky another, or else both of them together a duet. But who will accompany them? Could not Mavroucha?"

"Mavroucha," affirmed Madame la Générale, "cannot pass the most of her time in practising with young men!"

Her true mother's eye looked with firmness on the music-loving functionary; with disdain on Victor, and with admiration tempered with severity on Démiane.

“Well, little Hélène?”

“Little Hélène, that is another thing! Her mother brings her up so badly! They let her talk to every one!”

“Madame — the mother of — the mother of that young lady, will she consent?” asked Démiane, very much embarrassed to know how to properly designate little Hélène’s mamma.

“Oh! that person always consents!” said Madame la Générale, shrugging her shoulders more than ever, which made the triptych dance on her neck.

Victor instantly formed a bad opinion of little Hélène’s mamma; but he was a severe moralist, and Démiane saw nothing wrong in it.

“When can one see her?” said he.

“Monsieur will take you there,” said la Générale, pointing to the functionary with her chin.

“You will come and tell me what you have decided upon, will you not?” cried the General, just as the young men had stepped over the threshold of the door. “You ought to have asked them to take some tea,” said he to his wife when they were alone.

“People whom we do not know!” she replied disdainfully.

“But if Verlomine sends them here —”

“You do not know, General, what it is to watch over a young girl,” said la Générale. “When we have seen what they are, we will invite them perhaps.”

“Yes,” murmured the General, “when they will have gone.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

LITTLE HÉLÈNE'S MAMMA.

LITTLE HELENE'S mamma lived at the very end of the city, almost in the suburbs; her house, which was built of wood, was vast and barren looking, and was supported on badly cracked columns, which were painted yellow, with crowns of laurel-leaves white, after the style of the First Empire. It was an ugly house, indisputably, but a dwelling that possessed a very noble appearance. A rather large garden, that was full of old linden-trees, extended as far as the cliffs, and overlooked the Volga and the gardens of the ramparts. The visitors ran up the steps, and a servant maid, who was merry and fresh looking, but who was singularly attired, came to open the door for them; she was barefooted and laughed in their faces.

"We are washing," said she, "it is a fancy of Madame's. On awakening from her siesta, an hour ago, she said that she had dreamed we were washing the floors. This way, gentlemen; don't wet your feet. Jump a little over here, and you will find yourselves in the dining-room, which is dry."

Upon this singular advice, the three young men jumped one after the other, over a pool of soap-suds, which was already very black, and found themselves in the dining-room, which was dry.

Madame was not very wrong in having the floors

washed, to judge by the one in the dining-room, which could not have seen a brush since the preceding Christmas. Our friends looked at each other smiling, then the functionary said in a low voice with an indulgent tone:

"An odd house, but good music." A light step was heard, then some one jumped over the pool of soap-suds, and little Hélène found herself in the room.

"Mamma is coming," said she in a sweet voice, without seeming troubled by her peculiar exercise. Her starched petticoat, which had yet only half descended to its place, disclosed two pretty little feet that were shod in common slippers. She had a blue ribbon in her chestnut-colored hair, and wore a white muslin dress with small black spots which was not very clean. Her features were small, and too delicate to be yet well formed, and her thin and youthful arms, her small red hands, her large brown eyes which were a little sad, and all her person seemed resigned to some proximate calamity, and it was evidently impossible to give her any other name than that of "little Hélène."

"It is with you that these gentlemen have business," said the music-lover, with a graceful gesture of his arm towards the two brothers.

"With me?" said the young girl, looking first at Démiane and then at Victor, and then finally at Démiane who was the handsomer of the two.

"Yes, Mademoiselle," replied the latter, going straight to the point. "I wish to give a concert, and they assure

me that I shall have an audience, but there is no accompanist."

"I know, he is at the Hospital," said little H  l  ne, shaking her head compassionately.

"Precisely, and if you would be kind enough to accompany me, and the other artists as well, you would save us a great deal of trouble."

H  l  ne looked alternately at the three men, and her cheeks grew crimson, then pale, then crimson again.

"A large concert?" she asked.

"I hope so!" said D  miane, proudly.

"I should not dare to do so," H  l  ne replied, in a resigned tone of voice and casting down her eyes.

"Nothing is easier. You have already played in public?"

"Yes, but there were not a great many persons present."

"More or less, it makes no difference; the essential thing is to be able to play in time in the presence of strangers. You have talent they tell me!"

The young girl blushed and looked at a black spot which was conspicuous on the front of her skirt.

"I play the piano as well as I can," said she.

"That's perfect. I will send you the music, and you can practice it to-morrow; and we can play it together once a day after to-morrow, a second time on Friday or Saturday, and we will give the concert on Sunday."

H  l  ne did not seem disturbed at so short a notice, but let her eyes wander around the room.

"I have no dress ready," she murmured, looking embarrassed; "my white dress is not clean ——"

"We will wash it for you, Mademoiselle," cried the delighted maid, who appeared at that moment on her hands and knees in the soap suds, at the threshold of the door, with a brush in her hand and her hair in her eyes. "We will wash it very clean! We are not afraid of a little soap!"

The dishevelled head disappeared and the brush was rubbed over the floor frantically.

"Will your Mamma make no objection?" Démiane asked politely.

"Oh! no! she likes to have me play the piano before people. She wishes me to be an artist."

"If you can assure me of her consent," said Démiane, rising.

"Wait, I will go and speak to her about it," said Hélène, quickly.

She went to the door, jumping over the pool of water and the servant so lightly that no one could tell how she did it. While the three visitors looked at each other smiling, they heard a heavy footstep on the floor.

"You are insane," said a sleepy voice, "to scatter all your water into the corridor."

"Eh! Madame, where would you have me put it?" replied the maid, who stopped scrubbing.

"And you, where would you have me pass?" replied the same voice, with more vivacity.

"Do as Mademoiselle did," said the stout girl, laughing, "jump! The gentlemen jumped too!"

"Stupid!" said the voice. "Wipe that up immediately."

"The servant-maid's red hand appeared with a towel, and suddenly streams of water poured into the room, even under the visitor's chairs, but no one paid attention to them; little H  l  ne's Mamma entered and bowed with rather a haughty nod to the three men, who had arisen. Her daughter slipped in behind her and remained standing.

"You wish my daughter to accompany you?" said she to D  miane. "Good-morning, Monsieur Mozine," she added in an aside to the functionary.

"If it is not impossible, Madame," replied the artist, calling to his aid all his newly acquired knowledge of a man of the world.

"Oh! it is very easy, only she has no dress."

"Have we not told you, Madame, that we will wash and iron it!" said the servant-maid putting her head in at the door, only this time it was erect.

"Then it is all right. Do you play the violin?"

"I received the first prize of the Conservatoire of Moscow," said D  miane, very modestly.

"H  l  ne blushed and seemed disturbed. She had never played with a prize-man from the Conservatoire. Her mother smiled with delight.

"Prepare yourself well, little one," said she, "you will practise together in the concert-room."

"Oh! no, mamma," said H  l  ne, timidly, "not the first time."

"Well, here, then? It is arranged for day after to-morrow."

The young men rose and found themselves in the street without being obliged to jump any more; the stout servant had removed all obstacles.

"Is she not droll?" said Mazine, when they had taken a few steps.

"The mamma?"

"No, the daughter."

"I do not know, I did not notice her particularly."

"She resembles Madame Moutine," said Victor, in a low voice, "but her dress was very dirty."

"The house is so," replied the music-lover, philosophically.

CHAPTER XXVII.

TEA AT LITTLE HÉLÈNE'S.

THE daylight, entering in great floods through the four large windows of the drawing-room, of the house with columns, fell disagreeably on the walls which were ornamented with very ugly grey paper, which was covered with yellow-colored designs, of that kind which would be vainly sought after, except in the extreme corner of some very remote province. Four large, rounded windows were certainly a large number for lighting a single room, but when not the smallest little curtain, not the least glimpse of verdure, was added to these enormous bay-windows, when the broad daylight was in addition reflected on a shining, polished floor, and in a mirror that made one's nose appear crooked, one was in a certain way excusable for experiencing sensations on looking in the glass, very like those of a sick headache.

Démiane laid down his bow, wiped his brow and said to little Hélène :

“Don't you think it is too light here?”

Hélène blushed and nervously fingered the music-book which was placed on the piano-rack.

“They are washing the blinds,” said she, embarrassed ; “they were dirty —”

Démiane thought that they washed a great deal in that house, which did not seem, nevertheless, any the cleaner for it.

"You can have a screen," said H  l  ne, leaving her piano-stool with the sprightliness of a sylph. Before D  miane had time to open his mouth, she disappeared. He wiped his forehead again and looked around him.

What traveller in Russia is not familiar with the immense room in which a few cane-seated chairs placed along the walls, look at each other sadly from enormous panels which are framed in frightfully massive mahogany, supported by consoles which are as heavy as the stones of a fortress, these same consoles being upheld by chiseled feet, which make one think of those of the elephants which bear the ruined palaces of Angkor? The mirrors have a greenish hue, but are frequently beveled, though interminably long; and one is scarcely tempted to look at oneself in them, for they improve one but little, or even not at all. A chandelier in gilt bronze, in the style of the First Empire, hangs from the ceiling, draped in gauze which has once been white—if the house is well-cared for—which gives one the advantage at least, of not being able to see it, but which is quite bare, and made very dirty by flies, if the house is neglected; the one belonging to H  l  ne's mamma was uncovered and not at all handsome. A large piano, which is frequently new, and always *   queue*, fortunately takes up a great deal of space in the vast desert, and when the house is a well-ordered one, some ottomans covered with yellow damask, may also be found in it. There are white muslin curtains which ornament the windows, and are hung on *repouss  * gilded rods, and the windows are generally furnished besides with white blinds, and with plants of rich

foliage ; the whole presenting an aspect, if not hospitable, at least quite dignified. This is the principal drawing-room, that is to say : the ball-room.

The drawing-room of the house with columns, possessed of these adornments only those which were absolutely necessary, and besides the blinds were being washed, as H  l  ne had said ; but after all what was the use of such vain ornaments ? would the music be any the better for them ? The piano at least was excellent, but it was the only piece of modern furniture which the large house contained.

While D  miane was winking his eyes to escape the dazzle of the polished floor, H  l  ne returned, followed by the jovial servant, who carried in her outstretched arms a light screen, made of small black-painted strips of wood, and willow ornaments, the whole being lined with green glazed muslin. This cheap piece of furniture is to be found in all Russian dwellings, most frequently in the maid's room ; but this one belonged especially to the mistress of the house.

"Where must I place it for you ?" asked the stout maid, laughing. She always laughed, no doubt, from principle.

"Before the gentleman, between the window and his rack."

"That is an idea ! A screen ought to be placed behind one's back, in order to prevent draughts, but no one ever heard of such a thing as putting a screen in front !"

"Do as I bid you," insisted H  l  ne, with a sad tone, which was with her the expression of severity.

The maid obeyed, then drew back a step in order to enjoy the effect, shrugged her shoulders and went away.

"Let us begin again, will you?" said the young man, putting his violin to his shoulder.

Hélène answered with a nod, and immediately struck the first chord. She was always ready—never kept any one waiting, and never asked for anything. She played without stopping, almost without breathing, the entire *allegro*, and at the last note held her head motionless as though she were expecting a reproach.

"You play very fast," said Démiane, laughing; "I have hard work to follow you."

"Is it too fast?" said Hélène, turning her head a little toward him with some anxiety.

"Not at all! But I am not used to being so well accompanied!"

"You are in jest!" said the young girl, slightly turning away. All her movements were gentle, and executed with a sort of fear of making some noise, or of taking another's place. She seemed to contract her little person, in order to occupy the least possible space on earth.

"I am not jesting at all! accompanists are detestable, it is an acknowledged fact. Ah! if I were always accompanied as I am to-day, I would revolutionize the world!"

He sighed and touched a string of his violin. "The concert will be very fine," continued he an instant later. "I am sure I shall play well."

"God grant it!" said the little maid in a low tone, holding her breath.

Démiane raised his bow and they began the *andante* with wonderful precision. The piano and violin seemed to sound like one instrument, so truly did the chords harmonize. They continued thus, both of them being influenced to put all their science, all their feeling into the music, which from a duty was transformed into an exquisite delight.

Démiane thought of nothing but his art; elated by the new satisfaction, which was unknown to him till then, of being able to wholly forget the piano part, he allowed himself to play with an accompaniment as he had never played till then, except for himself; the result of which was that he heard, for the first time in his life, the music he performed just as the composer had conceived it. The public is unaware that except in particularly happy circumstances the performer only hears his own part well, and receives of the combined execution nothing but a vague impression. All the pleasure is for the listeners, and all the trouble for the artist; the latter is never really satisfied except when he plays for himself, or for friends whose criticism he does not fear.

"It is superb!" said the young man, when they finished; I have certainly played that sonata a hundred times, and this is the first time I have ever heard it."

"Why?" asked Hélène, whose red hands were resting wearily on the keys.

"Because they played the piano part like a tiresome duty, and you have executed it like an artist! That's the difference! And with your little hands too? How do you do it?"

Hélène bowed her head and looked at her hands; she found them very red and not very clean. The hands disappeared on her knees, one in the other.

“Do not hide them! They are brave little hands. Are you not tired?”

“No, I am never tired.”

“Then the second piece!”

The music began again; the daylight was waning, for the sun was going down behind the neighboring forests, and outside the shadows were lengthening in the streets, but the time did not seem long to the *virtuosi*, who were working with an ardor that would be surprising to any one who had not experienced the same feeling. When they had practised everything, when they were both entirely satisfied, little Hélène’s mamma made her appearance in the large empty room.

“Well!” said she, “are you pleased, Monsieur Markof?”

“Enchanted, madame, enchanted. Your daughter is a veritable artist, an extraordinary person; I have never heard any one accompany as she does. She will be a great artist, I assure you once more.”

“Do you hear, little Hélène?”

“Yes, mamma,” said the young girl lowering her head and closing the music-book.

“You will take a little something with us, no matter what it is, will you not, Monsieur Markof?” said the mamma, with an air of royal favor. “You must be hungry.”

Démiane was hungry, and he confessed it without shame; in consequence of which he followed the lady’s

majestic presence into a room which was almost as large as the drawing-room and quite as scantily furnished. The furniture was composed of eleven straw chairs, — the twelfth had a leg missing, and was lying in a corner with its three other legs in the air, — with a walnut extension table, which was very old, and so warped that its supports were constantly between Heaven and earth. There was neither *buffet* nor sideboard, nor any thing in the world that could make one suppose that a table and chairs were not all sufficient for furnishing a dining-room. We Western people, who have a passion for encumbering ourselves with nick-nacks, cannot understand such primitive simplicity, but it did not shock Démiane, especially as the rickety table was very well garnished.

“Take care, I beg of you,” said his hostess to him, “not to knock the table as you sit down, you might upset the samovar.”

Démiane took care, and as one might expect, knocked the leg of the table and put the samovar’s equilibrium in danger; but Hélène’s prudent hand had foreseen the accident and held the samovar by one of its handles so that all mishap was avoided.

“You should have your table repaired,” said he to the lady, laughing.

“Oh! it has been like this for so long that we are accustomed to it.”

“Do you never upset anything?”

“Almost every day; but we are accustomed to it.”

Since such accidents had become so charming a custom with these ladies, Démiane thought it would be

indelicate to say any more about it, and he gave all his attention to a covered dish that held a prominent place in the centre.

“It is fish from the Volga, Monsieur Markof,” said the lady to him, following his glance; “I hope you will find it to your taste.”

Tea and fried fish! It was a detestable bill-of-fare; however Démiane made no objection to it, and as the repast was set off with a number of different *hors d'œuvres*, he found it excellent.

While he was enjoying this odd repast he gave a glance at his hostess. Little Hélène's mamma was of no particular age, that is to say, she floated between thirty-five and fifty-five years. Her rather evident *embonpoint* was not a sign of health, for her complexion was yellow and worn; her blue eyes must have been very handsome once, but they were now only wearied and less dim than dark-circled. Some small wrinkles around her mouth contrasted with the youthfulness of her brow and with her brown hair, which was magnificent and heavy, and which obliged its owner to throw her head slightly back. She wore a skirt of light silk, which was worn and tumbled, but which had a long train, and over it a small jacket of very light chamois-colored cloth, which was trimmed with silver-braid, all of which was tarnished and spotted. The expression of her face was that of a gentle somnolence, which was barely interrupted by the necessary duties in regard to meals, and from time to time by some sharp remonstrance addressed to a clan of servants who appeared one after the other to remove or to place the dishes on the table.

"Perhaps you would prefer coffee?" said the lady, when Démiane had swallowed two large glasses of tea.

"Pacha, Macha, Glafera, make some coffee, quickly!"

"No, I thank you," exclaimed Markof; "it is impossible, Madame, I beg of you —"

But the servants had rushed towards the kitchen, and the sound of a coffee-mill was already to be heard; the lady reassured her guest with a wave of the hand. "I am very fond of it," said she, "but it does not agree with me; so I never take any except when we have people here."

"If it is to do you a service," said Démiane, who had a great desire to laugh, "I cannot refuse you."

The lady smiled and placidly crossed her dimpled hands on her lap. She understood jesting very well.

"When will you practise together for the second time?" said she in a sweet and very pleasant voice.

"I see no necessity for practising again together," replied Démiane; "it sounds as well as it possibly can."

Little Hélène bestowed on the young artist a grateful look, but it was so timid and fleeting that it scarcely reached the end of his cravat.

"But," continued he, "if Mademoiselle could again give me an hour or two, I would take a great deal of pleasure in playing some other pieces with her, some which I shall not play here, but which will do for the concerts I shall give this summer along the Volga."

"Nothing is easier," said the mamma gracefully, "little Hélène will be delighted to practise with so eminent an artist."

They exchanged compliments that were full of urban-

ity, and the young girl, who remained sitting upright in her chair, looked at her red hands with a shade of sadness.

"Thank him, H  l  ne, thank the gentleman, who so kindly wishes to contribute towards your perfection —"

"And to my own," added the young man, looking for the first time at the little *pianiste* with some attention.

The coffee appeared very opportunely ; when people have complimented each other, nothing remains but to separate, unless some favorable interruption occurs, and D  miane, who was a little heavy after such a good meal, did not feel disposed to leave at once. In spite of his protestations, he accepted a cup of coffee, and the feast began again with new elements.

"One must really come into the provinces, in order to have so good an appetite," said the artist at length by way of excusing an appetite of which he was ashamed.

"It is the air," said the lady.

"Probably. Who taught your daughter to play the piano?" he asked, a little from curiosity and a great deal for politeness' sake.

"It was the band-master of the regiment ; when the Colonel, my husband, lived, we had an excellent band-master : he played the piano to perfection, and he composed wonderful waltzes ; he had a great affection for little H  l  ne, and from her tenderest age taught her all he knew."

"He made an accomplished scholar."

"She profited by his lessons and she did well," said

the mamma, sighing, "for she must make it a livelihood. I have a pension from the Government, and this house belongs to me; but of what good is it? and I have a very small property, situated a little above the town, but all this does not bring in a very large income."

She sighed again, and her daughter raised to her face her sad eyes, which were sadder than ever. Little Hélène doubtless had heard this same story related many times, and in the same words, but she had never grown too familiar with it, at least not to the extent of becoming indifferent. Démiane understood why she never smiled.

"How she must bore herself!" he thought to himself. "But Mademoiselle plays in the concerts that are given here," he continued, aloud; "I do not suppose she does so gratuitously?"

"I beg your pardon, it is for the honor or the pleasure of it, whichever you prefer," continued the mother, somewhat bitterly, "and still, they do not find her well enough dressed; they wish her to have new gowns! And with what could one buy them, great heaven!"

Démiane said to himself that if the concert succeeded, before leaving the city, he would send some pretty present to the young *virtuosa*.

"Do you know," continued the lady, "when you return to Moscow, I wish you would try to find us some pupils. When I say us, it means for her, you understand? If you could hunt her up some scholars, I would leave this town without regret, I assure you."

"Have you lived here for a long while?" asked Démiane, mechanically.

"I was born here, and I married here. My father was too fond of cards; he lost everything, and my husband did not have a cent. We adored each other!"

"O foresight!" thought the artist.

"I was married only eight years. Since my husband's death, I have not cared for anything."

Hélène bent her head forward and bowed it very gently, so that her lips found themselves on her mother's hand and pressed it tenderly.

"She is a good child, Monsieur Markof," continued the lady, "and she does all she can. Try to find her some pupils, and we will be very grateful to you."

"I will try," replied he, "and I hope to succeed."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BOUQUET.

THE concert was superb, as they say on the banks of the Volga. Démiane felt that day the excessive joy of those absurd triumphs, in which the Slavonic race seems to throw all the exuberance that it economizes the rest of the time. Victor modestly quaffed the generous nectar that overflowed from the cup and was inebriated by it as though he were the honored one.

While a gentleman of the town executed on the zither a piece that was as insipid as the instrument itself—but he had sold a hundred and twenty tickets!—little Hélène slipped near Victor and began to lay regular siege to the brave fellow. Her victory was quick and easy; the key of the young cripple's heart was his brother Démiane, and the lock opened of itself.

"You love him very much," said she in conclusion, when she obtained a certain amount of information.

Victor nodded his head energetically.

"It was you who made him his violin?"

"Oh! not I alone! Our friend André helped me a great deal; our friend André is very clever."

Little Hélène remained thoughtful.

"I have no friends," said she, "no brothers, no sisters, no one!"

"That is a great pity!" said Victor feelingly.

He was born a brother to all those who had any cause for complaining of destiny.

"Mamma is very good, but ——"

She lowered her head.

"She is not young enough for you?" suggested Victor.

"It is not that. She does not like to give herself trouble."

"You would like to go into society, perhaps?"

"By no means. I love only music."

"What is it, then?" asked the honest fellow, for whom the world and its conventionalities had still an infinite number of mysteries.

"Not much!" — We are not rich, that is the misfortune!"

"We are not rich either!" said Victor, laughing. "What does that matter! Imagine that formerly we lived in *corners*."

"In *corners*?"

He was obliged to explain what a *corner* was to little Hélène; she smiled for an instant, then said:—"It is droll!" and again assumed her pre-occupied air.

"I would like to earn some money," said she, lifting her eyes to the platform which she saw outlined, from the room where she was. "What can one do to earn money?"

Victor pointed with a gesture to the hall and to the audience.

"There!" said he; "the way is not a bad one."

The young girl sighed.

"It is difficult," she said.

"Not for you, at all events! You play the piano like an angel! They will pay you very high at Moscow, you may be sure!"

"Do you believe so?"

"I am certain of it! What a pity that you could not come with us along the Volga! We would do wonders!"

The gentleman with the zither entered, bearing his instrument in his hand, and with all the joy of a deserved success painted on the space comprised between his crimson ears, his blond hair and his red beard.

"It is our turn now!" said Démiane, who entered from the opposite door. He had gone outside to breathe the air, for the heat was truly intolerable.

He entered the hall with little Hélène on his arm, and was greeted with frenzied applause. He smiled, thanked them, and drew himself up, while the young girl tranquilly arranged the music on the piano. She felt a calm joy in hearing this artist applauded, who was born in a village, and who had won the first prize of the Conservatoire by the sheer force of work and of will. Démiane's success seemed to her an act of justice on the part of Fate; after having lived in a *corner*, this hero might aspire to a palace. When the concert was over, Démiane hardly had time to thank his young assistant; she withdrew discreetly, escorted by the merry, stout maid, who, for the occasion, had put a green *fichu* with yellow flowers, over her shoulders, which produced an astonishing effect, and she returned to the house with columns to make some tea for her mamma, who had palpitations of the heart that day and had remained in bed.

While she was going to her large gloomy dwelling, Démiane had much to do in order to escape from the civilities of the towns-people. They urged him to give a second concert. All the amateurs promised him their assistance; Madame la Générale, accompanied by her daughter, made him agree to go and take tea at her house the same evening, and all the young men, calling him by his name, created a clamor that deafened him. He was obliged to consent to a second concert for the following Thursday, and the enthusiastic crowd dispersed to spread the great news through all Jaroslav, and to annoy in a proper manner, by the story of his triumph, those who had not been able, or who had not wished to be present.

Madame la Générale invited for that evening all the best society in Jaroslav. The reason of her change of humor, was an extremely simple one. Démiane had not presented himself at her house since his first visit; the General having the gout, had not been able to rehearse his *duet*, and our friend had too many other things to do, to go and inquire about him, as he should have done. Madame la Générale was dying to see the handsome youth again, and moreover, she had heard of the odd repast he had accepted at little Hélène's mamma's; a cruel jealousy took possession of her soul, and she resolved to exhibit Démiane at her house, to all the flower of the town! On what does the fate of empires hang!

Démiane had a great desire to go to bed, although it was not yet four o'clock in the afternoon, but Victor was very hungry, on account of having eaten nothing

since the day before, so fast had his heart beaten with anxiety and hope. The two brothers declined a dozen invitations to dinner, under the pretext of being fatigued, and went to their hotel, where they ordered themselves a repast to be served in their room. D  miane looked at the food with disdain, took two or three turns in the large chamber, which was adorned with a blue, brown and white wall-paper, with large designs of foliage on it, and which was as little conducive to sleep, as are the majority of hotel rooms, and then threw himself on the bed. Victor held still the spoonful of soup that he had carried halfway to his lips, and looked at him anxiously.

"Go on," said the musician; "don't worry yourself about me. It seems that after every concert I must feel the same weariness! Bah! I suppose one gets used to it; perhaps; we will see after our tenth one."

He yawned, turned himself over and tried to sleep but the noise outside rendered slumber difficult. The joyous animation in the *traktirs* continued to increase since the morning, and the air everywhere was trembling with the vibration of *balalaïkas*, Tzigane's, tambourines, accordeons, and all the portable instruments which are in use among the people. After a few vain attempts to court sleep, D  miane sat upright on the edge of his bed, rubbed his eyes and said to his brother:

"Do you know how much the concert brought us?"

Victor took out his note-book and read:

"Expenses: ninety-two roubles; receipts: five hundred and twenty-one roubles; net profits: four hundred and twenty-nine roubles, which are in my side pocket."

"So much as that?" said Démiane, who was quite awake, and who jumped to his feet.

"Certainly! do you think I have added any of mine to it?"

The young artist approached the table.

"Let me see it," said he, "these Jaroslavstis' money. It is like the Muscovites'," he added, after having fingered the bank-bills. "What shall we give little Hélène?"

"Give her mamma some money. They are not rich, the little girl told me so just now."

"Agreed. We will give — How much?"

"Twenty-five roubles?"

Démiane shrugged his shoulders. "You are jesting," said he, "fifty would not be too much. Do you believe she will accept it?"

"I have no doubt she will; the mamma, I mean to say. The young girl seems very unselfish."

"Well, I will go and order a bouquet for the young lady. Give me an envelope to put the money in for her mamma."

While this was being done, Démiane whistled a popular tune.

"It is a pity," said he, "that one cannot have an accompanist along with one: it would save a great loss of time, and many useless rehearsals! But it is a luxury that I cannot yet give myself."

"Without considering," observed Victor, "that one sometimes gives one's self a master in that way! There are persons who have such disagreeable characters!"

"As for that, yes! Are you coming?" said the musician, taking his hat.

“If you have no need of me, I would prefer to finish my dinner!”

Démiane left, laughing, and went to a florist's, whose address had been given him at the hotel. The bouquet being ordered, our friend gave himself the pleasure of looking at it while it was being made. Men become weary of the pleasure of sending bouquets; it seems that women also grow weary sometimes of receiving them, though this assertion appears a more hazardous one, but the first bouquets, whether one receives, or whether one gives them, possess a peculiar fragrance; it is a delicate pleasure, which recalls to the mind or summons forth from the memory a whole range of pure and delicate thoughts. There exists no more real equality among flowers than among men: there is no law in the world that would make a rich booby the equal in the eyes of society of some distinguished looking person who has no fortune, any more than a bouquet of tulips could produce the same effect as a handful of lilies-of-the-valley, and the gardenia will never make one think of the same things as will a bachelor's-button, no matter how charming the bouquet of field-flowers may be. Thanks to the association of ideas, there will always be an aristocracy among plants.

When the bouquet was finished Démiane looked at it with delight; they were the first flowers he had ever given to a woman, and he was very grateful to little Hélène for having made him taste this new happiness.

“To whom must they be sent?” asked the florist with a smile which he intended should be a knowing one.

At the young *virtuosa's* name, the smile departed: little Hélène was not an interesting person. However a boy was dispatched with it and with Démiane's card.

Just as the latter was going to follow his present, a ray of sunshine streamed through the street with so much boldness that the young man turned his back to it, in search of shade, and his feet soon led him into the fields. He found the sun there, but he went behind a clump of great birch-trees, whose entwined branches formed a very nice screen. It was under the shadow of these beautiful trees that our friend took a short siesta, which was full of dreams and visions.

When he awoke the sun was hiding itself behind the neighboring forest, leaving enough brightness floating in the air to prevent things which were perfectly illumined from casting any shadows on the ground. This soft light fills one with agreeable impressions, and it was with a mind quite free from all care that Démiane went towards the house with columns.

As he approached some well-known sounds struck his ear. It was the piano arrangement of Mendelssohn's Fourth Symphony, which is simply a hymn to joy; the earnest appeals of the high notes, the trembling of the lower tones, which seem to hasten to a happy end, give to the ear the impression of a beautiful, bright, sunshiny spring day, one of those days on which one cannot be sad, and when, cost what it may, one must rush forth under the young leaves just bursting from their buds.

How little Hélène played that joyful symphony! How she put her own individual accent into it which

the *fortes*, *pianos*, *accelerandos*, *rallentandos* of the printed music could never express, no matter how much pains one might take to note them! She played as though she were composing the music as she went along, which one would have said was borne afar by a group of butterflies, and the sounds flew away in the calm, luminous, evening air, as though they went to make part of some invisible harmony, high up in the blue heavens, where the swallows described their fantastic circles.

Démiane slackened his steps, and then stopped; the windows of the house were wide open, but no one appeared at them; he waited until the *allegro* was finished, and then he rang. Little Hélène pushed away her piano-stool and appeared on the threshold of the drawing-room just as he entered the ante-chamber. At the sight of the young man her pretty little face became of a rosy hue, and she made a slight movement towards him, which was at once checked.

"You have an extraordinary talent," said Démiane to her, without taking time to show her the least civility.

"What a beautiful bouquet you sent me," she replied, as though there was a necessary relation between the two ideas.

They entered the drawing-room together, and Démiane saw on the grand piano his bouquet in a common vase, placed so that it could be seen above the music-rack by any one who was playing.

"It is true, it is pretty," said he, smiling, "but you must thank the florist for that."

"I have never received a bouquet before," said little Hélène, leaning over the roses to drink in their sweetness.

"And I have never sent one before ; what a coincidence !" said Démiane, laughing. "Pray continue your symphony."

"Would it give you pleasure ?"

"Certainly ! or else I would not have asked you."

She sat down before the piano without the least hesitation, and began the little *allegretto*, which is so modest, so melancholy, and so simple, and which is the thin, cautious shadow of that picture of brilliant sunshine. While she played, a thousand different impressions were painted on her pretty, little face, which was as unassuming and as sweet as the music itself ; she felt what the Master intended should be felt, and something far more rare, she knew how to render it.

"Go on," said Démiane when she ended.

She continued, and the *minuetto* resumed under her fingers the fantastic and undulating motion of butterflies in the June air ; joy returned to her delicate features as well as to the atmosphere of the drawing-room, and Démiane declared himself satisfied when she finished.

"It is very good, very good," said he, while the virtuosa refreshed herself by plunging her small nose in her bouquet. "You are very wrong not to play in public. You have in your ten fingers what is necessary to make yourself a reputation."

"I should never dare to do it !" said Hélène, looking at him with an alarmed air.

"I assure you that I have heard persons play who did not equal you by a great deal!"

She shook her head.

"Here, they would never allow me to play alone in a concert; I am only good as an accompanist, and they know it very well. I also, know it well!"

"It is not my opinion," continued Démiane. "By the way, what shall we play at our next concert?"

"Is it true then, that there will be a second concert? I am very glad of it! We will play anything you wish!" said Hélène, joyfully.

Démiane looked at her attentively for the first time.

"How old are you?" said he to her, with some surprise.

"Nineteen years old. Have I not still the appearance of a little girl?"

"Yes and no, that depends. I thought you were younger, however."

"Every one thinks me younger than I am, and calls me little Hélène, because I have not seemed to know how to grow."

Démiane measured her with his eye; she was not small, but she was so slender, so thin, so fragile; her feet, her hands, her face, were so delicate that she looked like a child. Perceiving herself thus the object of the young man's scrutiny, she seemed disturbed and returned to her bouquet, her great consoler and her friend.

"I am glad to-day," said she; "it is a very long while, oh! a very long while since I have been so glad. It is because the concert succeeded so well."

"Ah!" said Démiane, "and your mamma? I quite forgot to ask you how she was?"

"She is no worse; she has remained in bed. It often happens to her —"

"To be ill?"

"Yes, and to remain in bed. But I can play the piano just the same, it does not disturb her."

"I have something for her —"

"I will take it to her," said Hélène eagerly; "what is it?"

Démiane put his two fingers into his pocket, then he hesitated and blushed.

"I would prefer," said he, "to send it to her by the maid."

Hélène called the stout maid, who presented herself immediately. She had laid aside her green *fichu*, but her well-soaped face was as shiny as ever.

"Take that to Madame," said he to the rustic *soubrette*, as he handed her the closed envelope.

Hélène followed with her eyes the message and the messenger, and a shadow spread over her face; she then looked at the young artist alarmed and reproachfully.

Démiane, who was now in his turn disconcerted, approached the bouquet and smelt a bit of heliotrope.

"Madame would like to speak to you," said the Iris, returning.

He followed her into an odd looking room, which was still more oddly furnished. A very low camp-bed occupied the middle of the chamber, and on it Hélène's mamma, who was fully dressed, and covered with an

old pelisse of grey fur, was taking a cup of tea. The cinders and remains of a fabulous number of cigarettes covered the waiter which was placed on a chair near her. The small willow screen, which had previously protected the young man's eyes from the dazzling daylight in the drawing-room, was in its old place in front of the bed ; two or three chairs, filled with parts of her toilette, a washstand, whose pitcher was without a handle, and which was moreover slightly chipped in places, a pair of embroidered slippers on the edge of the bed, and a pack of cards scattered on a table, completed the furniture.

"Sit down, Monsieur Markof," said the lady, pointing to a chair at the foot of the bed, which the maid dusted with her apron before offering to him ; "I must thank you for the generosity you have displayed toward us. The bouquet was quite sufficient."

Démiane smiled ; this way of considering things appeared original to him, but he was so surprised at what he saw around him, that he only had time to make some commonplace reply.

"I hope," continued the Mamma, "that you will bring good luck to my little Hélène ; this is the first time that her talent has earned her anything !"

"It will enrich her soon, I hope," said Démiane politely.

"I doubt it ! No one is a prophet in his own country, you know, Monsieur Markof ; we should be obliged to leave Jaroslav ; and without any friends, without any protector, where could two women go alone ?"

Démiane nodded his head approvingly.

"And then," said he, "no doubt you cling to this house, to your habits?"—

"My habits, good Heavens! I have had none for a long while! I sleep on a camp-bed, you see; it belonged to my late husband, when he accompanied his regiment. I was married here, Monsieur, but I followed the Colonel to all his garrisons, and I only returned when he died. I assure you that in that kind of life one does not acquire habits!"

"Are you very fond of Jaroslav, then?"

"Not at all! It is a horrible town; the aristocracy of the place are insufferably haughty; these people have never been willing to treat me as their equal, and yet as regards my birth, I am better than any of them; but a *colonelle* has no rank, one must be a *générale*, and then I am not rich.—Never mind, Monsieur Markof, you have acted very nicely, and I must thank you for it."

The artist rose, bowed and returned to the drawing-room where Hélène met him half reproachfully; but on seeing Démiane's calmness, her face again wore its usual expression.

"Till to-morrow," said he to her as he held out his hand; "I will come at twelve o'clock, and we will select our pieces."

"Are you going? I thought that perhaps you would remain to take some tea with us!"

"I am invited to Madame la Générale's house. You will be there without doubt?"

"They have not asked me," said she bowing her

head; "they never invite me when they have company."

"So much the worse for them!" said the young man frowning: "it does no honor to their good taste. Till to-morrow, then."

"Bring your brother with you," said she timidly, as she accompanied him to the door.

"Ah! you have become acquainted with each other?"

"He is so good! I think I should like him very much.—He will come, will he not?"

"He will be too happy to obey you."

The door closed on Démiane, and Hélène from the window, saw him walking away proudly, with head erect; he was as handsome and as proud as Apollo. When he disappeared, she returned to the piano, touched the keys with the ends of her fingers, and smelt of her bouquet, then suddenly recalling something went to find her mother.

"Little one," said the latter, on seeing her, "guess how much Markof has given us for the concert?"

The little one's eyes dilated strangely, and she did not answer.

"Fifty roubles, my darling! It is the first money that you have earned; make the sign of the cross with it so that it may bring you happiness!"

Hélène obeyed mechanically, then returned the bank bill to her mother.

"We are going to make you a new dress for the other concert, a beautiful tarlatane — shall it be pink?"

"White, mamma, if you please."

“As you choose. Send me the maid with your old dress, that I may see how much material is needed.”

Hélène left and executed her mother's order; but instead of returning to assist at the council, she went directly to her bouquet.

The daylight was dying, without becoming quite dark, as it does at that period of the year in that latitude; and the drawing-room, being less lighted, seemed also sad and barren; little Hélène could dream at her ease. She began to walk slowly from one end of the large room to the other, stopping a moment each time that she passed near the flowers, and soon, without knowing the reason why, she found her face bathed in tears. The peace of that day had been disturbed.—By what? It was very nice, however, to have earned so much money.—Earned it! The first money that one earns gives birth to so many emotions, so many new thoughts in one who is beginning life.—Yes, but it ought not to have been given by Démiane! She would have been so happy to have played with him, without any pay, for the honor of it.—She suddenly seized her bouquet, buried her face in it and her tears fell on the roses.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MADAME LA GÉNÉRALE'S PARTY.

AT Madame la Générale's, Démiane in truth received an ovation; this lady who by the way, could not pride herself on being logical, proclaimed the young artist, "the first man of his age!" No one knew, however, very well what she meant by this expression, and the assembly was a brilliant one; the good lady invited all the most fashionable people in Jaroslav, her best friends and her worst enemies, the former for the pleasure of their society, the latter, in order to humiliate them by her superiority. Looking very ugly and being over dressed she went from one group to another, and the result of her efforts was a general request for a piece on the violin.

Démiane was not very much inclined to play; besides the weariness which was natural for him to feel after an effort such as he had made that day, he shared with many artists an idea that the common run of people contend against vehemently, but which nevertheless gains ground every day, namely: that a musician is no more obliged to pay for his invitation by giving a specimen of his talent, than a painter is constrained by custom to make a sketch every time he goes to pass an hour in a drawing-room. However the enthusiastic young folks having applauded him several times, he sent to the hotel for his instrument of torture, and suffered himself to be conducted to the piano.

Mademoiselle Mavroucha, her Excellency Madame la Générale's own daughter, dressed in light blue and extremely *décolletée*, awaited him on the piano-stool with her yellow shoulders protruding prominently from her dress, and her red arms resting on her knees. She cast a pathetic glance at the artist, and pointed with her finger to the name of the piece of music that was open on the rack. It was the very one which Démiane played with Hélène that very morning. Without thinking of his accompaniment, the young man, who meant no harm, gave himself the note, and the music began.

What an artist of talent can suffer when he is badly accompanied and when, the piano being played by a woman, he cannot give vent in a low tone to one of those good oaths which solace a troubled spirit, no one can appreciate save those who have been in such a situation. The piece was finished, to the admiration of some, and to the dissatisfaction of others; for one meets everywhere in Russia, people of taste, who are *connoisseurs* in music, and whom it is impossible to deceive.

"What do you think of my daughter's playing?" asked la Générale, as she approached Démiane to thank him.

"She is still a little inexperienced; but at her age that is only an additional charm!" the artist dared to reply, thinking of the success of his second concert, and trusting that the tickets the mother would sell would pay him for the impudent falsehood.

Mavroucha raised her eyes, which were full of smothered fire, on the young man, and smiled and blushed.

He went to receive compliments from the others, and the young girl withdrew into a little corner which was isolated from the drawing-room by some green plants, in order to meditate on an idea which had just taken root in her dull brain.

The young man found that she possessed charms,—and she! how much did she not find in him! Now Mademoiselle Mavra—of which Mavroucha is the pet name and not the abbreviation, as is usually the case with most nicknames—had stuffed her head with novels at the Institute of Kasan, where she was educated; in all those novels, a young girl of good family, after a thousand vicissitudes, became the wife of a handsome young man without fortune, who was discovered afterwards to be an immensely rich prince. But what did rank or fortune matter to Mademoiselle Mavra? The essential thing for the moment was to see herself beloved by a handsome young man, who was different from all others and noticeably destined for something extraordinary. Démiane united all these qualities and the young girl, with that readiness for receiving impressions, which distinguishes young ladies who are educated in Institutes, from all other young ladies on the globe, declared herself instantly in love with the violinist.

It is indeed something to be in love with a remarkable young man, but it is also very necessary that he should return that love. Now how can he return it if he does not know of it? Would a violinist of talent, but without fortune, dare to raise his eyes to the daughter of a General, to an heiress, to the flower of

the nobility of the country? Evidently he would not. Besides, true merit is always modest and needs to be encouraged. Therefore that Démiane must be encouraged was as clear as the day.

While Madame la Générale, who was talking of forming a *contre-danse*, was looking for her daughter, who was so well protected from indiscreet young men, — contrary to little Hélène, whom they allowed to talk with every one, — the young person was scribbling in her room, on a little piece of pink paper, the following words, which were an echo of her thoughts:

“Démiane, you have genius and I love you!

“MAVRA.”

“Mavroucha!” cried her mamma, who was looking for her everywhere.

“Mamma!” replied the young lady, appearing.

“Where are you hiding yourself? The dances must be arranged! *Mon Dieu!* how red your face is!”

“It is the heat, mamma,” replied the young dissembler.

“Come quickly, I am going to ask Monsieur Markof to dance the first *contre-danse* with me. I think he will know enough to ask you for the second one.”

“Yes, mamma.”

The ball opened brilliantly. Markof had progressed since the day of his entrance into society under the auspices of the *Gesellschaft*, and he went through the first quadrille, and even the *cotillon*, with honor to himself. For the second *contre-danse*, he engaged Mademoiselle Mavra, as had been foreseen; but what he had

not foreseen was the thunderbolt in a serene sky, which was to put a stop to his successes for that day.

The first figure ended. During the moments of rest, when every one having returned to his place, awaits the signal from the piano to begin the second, he held out his hand to his partner, who made an awkward movement, and the pink paper which was folded together and which she had taken from her glove, fell at their feet on the polished floor.

One can never imagine, unless one has heard it, what a noise a little piece of folded paper can make as it falls on the floor, when every one is motionless and silent, waiting for the signal. Moreover, Mavra's dress was blue, the polished floor light-brown, the note pink and written on thick paper, and clumsily folded. The entire company turned their eyes towards the couple; Mavra gave a scream of despair and fell on her chair in a half-real, half-feigned swoon.

"A note!" This word ran through the room in a very loud whisper, and betokened a rising storm.

"My daughter!" exclaimed la Générale, flying to her child.

The unfortunate Démiane, to whom Caroline had not revealed all the secrets of feminine artfulness, stooped, without thinking there was any harm in so doing, to pick up the note. La Générale, who suspected the truth—her instinct probably being aided by something similar in her experience—thought only of keeping up appearances.

"A note to my daughter!" she exclaimed; "you dare try to give a note to my daughter, and in my

presence! in the presence of this honorable company! Ah! Monsieur! you are only a miserable madman! Begone!"

"I!" exclaimed Démiane, with a bound, at the undeserved insult. "I, with a note! May the devil take me if the note did not fall from your daughter's hand!"

Two thirds of the company began to laugh. Mademoiselle Mavra's romantic disposition was a secret to no one, and out of forty guests, there were at least thirty-nine who were perfectly convinced of Démiane's truthfulness. But the young girl's honor, said some, the respect due to appearances, said others, made a scape-goat necessary, and Démiane lost his cause by pleading it with too much simplicity. Another, cleverer than he, would have humbly excused himself, while at the same time, knowingly winking to the right and to the left, and he would have had the whole town on his side. In the state in which things were, there was nothing for our friend to do but to take his hat and retire, which he did, while a too zealous lady threw the contents of a pitcher of water over Mavra's blue dress and thus drew the young girl from her swoon.

Victor, who escaped from the fray, followed his brother without saying a word, and they returned to their hotel very much disenchanted.

"What will happen?" asked poor Victor, sadly, when each one was seated on his own bed. There is no one who has not remarked how in all great calamities, one sits more willingly on the edge of one's bed than on a chair, when the height of the bed will allow it.

“The second concert is done for!” replied Démiane, accompanying this conclusion with an expression that was not very flattering to Mademoiselle Mavra, whose name he did not know.

“Then it was she who gave the note to you!”

“Do you suppose by any chance that I am stupid enough.—If she had only known how to do it adroitly. But she is as silly as she is ugly!”

“What can we do?”

“How can I tell? Go to bed first and try to sleep, for it is midnight. There will be time enough to grumble to-morrow and on the following days!”

CHAPTER XXX.

DRIVEN AWAY!

IT happened the next day, that an order arrived from the chief of police to leave the town within twenty-four hours.

Such a heavy blow, such an undeserved affront was well calculated to dishearten timid Victor. Démiane was not of the same temperament; hardly had he heard the fatal news, than he went at once from house to house, endeavoring not to diminish its effect, but to make himself sure of some friends.

Friends were not wanting, but every one, while wholly blaming Madame la Générale and her silly daughter, recognized the necessity of bowing to the decrees of the authorities. They were very willing to laugh in their sleeves at the mishap which had occurred to the pink note, and no one had believed Démiane guilty; but no person was willing to undertake to intercede with the chief of police, with the Governor, or any one else.

"The one who is the most vexed," said Mazine, as he accompanied Démiane to the door of his office, "is the General, who will not be able to play his famous *duo* for the clarionette and violin; it is the ninth time that he has missed the occasion of so doing; he must be furious, for he will never find a like one again."

The young artist was not in a much better temper

than the General, but he had no right to complain — aloud, at least, — and recognizing the uselessness of his efforts, he resolved to yield to fate instead of struggling against it.

“What do you advise me to do?” he asked the music-lover.

“To go and give a concert in another town, a little distant from here; they gossip so much in the country! Were I in your place, I would go as far as Nijni without stopping. Nijni is far enough away for the rumors of Jaroslav to die away before reaching it.”

“We are going to leave,” said Démiane to Victor when he returned to the hotel. “I have just come from the river bank. There is a boat which leaves for Nijni at ten o’clock to-night. We will take it.”

“So much the better!” sighed the poor fellow. “Since the police have interfered with our affairs, I do not even dare to go near the window. The waiters in the hotel look at me with suspicious glances; I am sure they think that we have stolen something!”

Démiane shrugged his shoulders and began to pile his things into his valise. Victor did the same on his side, but so mournfully that it was a severe trial for his brother’s nerves. When they finished they looked at each other, and the violinist’s bad humor burst forth.

“Though you may look like a fountain whose basin has been carried away, it will not prevent la Générale from being a goose, her daughter a dunce and the General an ass! without counting the chief of the police and the Governor, who are two buffaloes!”

“Démiane, in the name of Heaven, hold your

tongue! You will get us into prison!" exclaimed Victor, who was bold through his alarm.

"I have finished with that menagerie," concluded Démiane, who was a little calmed by the words he uttered. "What I meant to say to you was, that you really look as though you had committed some theft, and that your face will be the means of our getting shot if you do not change it! Rouse yourself and come with me."

"Go out in the street?" stammered Victor, who had become quite pale.

"Where would you have one go, if not in the street? Really, I believe the air of this town is unusually stupefying! I do not understand you!"

"In the street, Démiane; why, they will point their fingers at us!"

"Well, that will occupy them. I think they have become idiotic from having nothing to do. It will be an occupation for them until this evening, and to-morrow they can rest."

"Where do you wish to go?"

"To little Hélène's! We cannot leave without bidding them good-bye. And then we will see if they are as stupid as the others. That would surprise me, however."

Victor did not dread little Hélène very much, and if he could have gone to her house without passing through the streets, he would have shown an astonishing eagerness to do so. Unfortunately, it was impossible, and he was obliged to go out under curious, cunning or alarmed glances, according to the characters

of the different waiters in the hotel. Just as they were about to step across the threshold of the door, the proprietor presented himself, with a paper in his hand.

"Will these gentlemen please to settle their little bill," said he, not very politely.

"But we are not going to leave till this evening," observed Victor, who did not understand.

"I would prefer to have your luggage carried to the boat immediately," continued the personage.

Victor was going to have a discussion, but his brother put his hand on his arm.

"You do not understand," said he calmly, "that this good man turns us out of doors. He imagines that we have stolen the bell from the cathedral. Show me your bill, my friend," said he to the host, who did not know what face to put on the matter.

He took the paper, and placed it on the high desk which is to be found in the peristyles of all Russian hotels, probably for the purpose of revising bills, and added the sum with the same calmness as though he were at school.

"You have twice charged the tea we had day before yesterday in the morning, and two dinners too many; see for yourself."

"It is true," stammered the host, "permit me, I will go and alter it —"

"I will alter it myself. There is your money. As to our luggage, don't trouble yourself about it, we will take it ourselves. Do you wish to look into our valises to see whether we are carrying off any of your furniture?"

“Permit me, Monsieur, such an idea never —” murmured the host, astounded at this manner of acting.

“No such idea? well, so much the better.”

Démiane ran quickly up to their room, while the host made the most profuse excuses to Victor, who did not listen to him, and he descended immediately, carrying the two valises in one hand, and his violin in its case in the other.

“Come, brother,” said he, “do not let us contaminate any longer the honorable house of this proprietor. Good afternoon, Monsieur, and good luck!”

He left without turning round, followed by Victor, who hurriedly took one of the valises from him.

When they turned the corner of the first street, Démiane stopped to change the articles he was carrying, from one hand to another.

“That is not the way to the river,” observed Victor, seeing him continue his route with a deliberate step.

“Did I not tell you that we were going to the house of little Hélène!” growled Démiane, hastening his gait.

CHAPTER XXXI.

QUICK RESOLVES.

AT the artist's ring,—he rang very loudly without knowing it,—the stout maid came running with bare feet and opened the door with a merry look on her face; at the sight of the valises she burst out laughing, and ran to announce to her mistress the unexpected visit of the gentlemen who were loaded with packages. Her story must have been eloquent, for little Hélène's mamma appeared at once, followed by her daughter, whose anxious face lighted up on seeing Démiane.

“What is the matter?” said the mother.

“They have driven us away from here,” answered the young man; “the police find us dangerous.”

“The police? You are dreaming!” and Démiane related in a few words the scandal of the day before and its unfortunate result. When he came to the pink note, he surprised a smile on little Hélène's face, which stopped him short.

“Does it not astonish you?” said he brusquely.

“No!” answered the young girl, shaking her head gently, “but never mind.”

He continued his story, and finished it with the scene with the hotel-keeper.

“You must dine with us,” said the mamma, as soon as he ended, “and then we will talk about it. *Mon*

Dieu! what a misfortune! I thought that perhaps you would settle here! My daughter would have improved so much with you!"

"And I," said the young man with regret. "I shall never find anywhere an accompanist like herself! It was such a pleasure to play with her, yes, a pleasure such as I had never before experienced."

Little *Hélène* looked at him furtively in order to thank him. At the announcement of this sudden departure, she felt overcome and ready to burst into tears without knowing why: it seemed to her that the earth was failing her under her feet, and breath to her lungs, that life was becoming a torture and she could not explain to herself the cause of her strange wretchedness.

"Where are you going?" said the mamma.

"To *Nijni*."

"And from there?"

"I do not know! Perhaps to the *Caucasus*!"

"To the *Caucasus*! so far!"

Victor looked at his brother with astonishment: he had never heard the *Caucasus* spoken of. Where did he get this sudden caprice? But *Démiane* paid no attention to him.

"What a pity!" continued the mamma, "that I am not ten years younger, I would have gone with you. I adore travelling, and little *Hélène* would have accompanied you as well at *Nijni* as here."

"Madame!" exclaimed *Démiane*, who was transported with delight, "it is Providence that has inspired you with that idea. Come with us! We will give excellent concerts and we will make heaps of money!"

The mamma began to laugh. The daughter blushed.

"What a joke!" said the lady, good-naturedly.

"You are not serious."

"I am perfectly serious. When you have had enough of it, you will be quite at liberty to return here."

"What would they say about it in the town?"

"What do they not say now? Does that make any difference to you?"

The mamma hesitated for an instant.

"What do you say about it, Hélène? It is not serious?" said she, turning towards her daughter.

"I would like very much to descend the Volga, mamma," she answered with her tranquil voice, but turning away her head.

"Oh! Madame, come," said Victor, "we will form one family; it will be a thousand times more charming, and then we will also be more respectable."

Victor, as one sees, had ideas of his own about respectability; but his ideas were of very little importance in regard to what concerns us; the lady smiled with an undecided air.

"Madame, I beg of you!" said Démiane. "I am ready to give you half of the profits; it will save us from having recourse to those chance artists, whom one is obliged to endure in towns, and with whom, no matter what one does, one is never quits. Do you not wish to come, Mademoiselle?" added he, turning to Hélène.

She rose and leaned against the piano, and her head was very near her yesterday's bouquet, which was still very fresh and full of perfume.

"I do!" she replied faintly, in so clear a voice that they all looked at her, surprised at her curtness.

"Come, then!" said her mother, with a sigh.

"Are you in earnest?"

"No one could be more so."

"But we are going to leave this evening," Victor remarked.

"Well! we will leave together! We will make your new dress at Nijni, will we not, little one?"

Hélène approved with a nod. She had become dumb again since the announcement of her resolve.

"I am going to pack the trunk," said her mother, "will you come?"

"I pack so badly, mamma," said she, beseechingly.

"Let us rehearse, Mademoiselle, let us rehearse," said Démiane, with eagerness. "Who knows when we will have a good piano to practise on. It will do for our second concert!"

"That is right, rehearse," said the mamma, disappearing.

Victor, alone acting as the public, placed himself as well as he could on an uncomfortable chair, and a few minutes later, our musicians, lost in the ardor of their study, forgot the police, Madame la Générale, and even their proposed departure.

Towards midnight, for a boat that is not behindhand on the Volga is no longer a boat, the four travellers, who had not left each other, found themselves on one of those superb steamboats that are so comfortably furnished. They secured places in the saloons and installed themselves on divans, where they were to pass

the night. Just as Démiane was shutting his eyes, Victor approached him and said to him in his ear:

“Do you know the name of little Héléne’s mamma?”

“No, and you?”

“Neither do I; we must ask her what it is.”

The lady was going to and fro, arranging her numerous small parcels.

Démiane rose to his feet and approached her politely:

“I beg you to excuse me,” said he, “but I have not the honor of knowing your family name?”

She began to laugh; and Héléne, who was already stretched out on the divan, turned around to see what amused her so much.

“How curious!” said the lady. “Here we are such good friends, we are travelling together, we are united for some time at least, and you do not know my name! How did you speak of me then between yourselves?”

Victor smiled.

“Little Héléne’s mamma,” said he.

“Do you hear, little one?”

Héléne smiled also, and her smile could be seen on her sweet face, in spite of the uncertain glimmer of the candle, which very feebly lighted the deserted saloon, which they occupied alone.

“My name is Madame Mianof,” said the mamma, as she lay down to sleep in her turn. “Good-night, my dear friends. A good night on the Volga, and may God watch over our journey.”

“Amen!” replied the three young people, with that earnestness of religious sentiment which one finds everywhere in Russia.

CHAPTER XXXII.

DESCENDING THE VOLGA.

WHEN people have travelled together on a boat for twenty-four hours, it seems as though they had known each other all their lives; the sun rose the next morning on the recently formed colony with as little ceremony as though it had already shone on their united heads for twenty years. Démiane's first impressions, on awaking, were a little strange; first, he had never before been on a steamboat, and then, he had never slept with so many about him. His first glance met Madame Mianof's feet; she was sleeping calmly, exactly as if she were in her ugly house with columns; simply from looking at her slumber one understood how very little the idea of travelling could disturb her. She had the manner of a person who had passed her existence on steamboat divans, and who had learned how to derive the greatest possible comfort from them.

Démiane rose and tried to collect his thoughts; it was certainly a very extraordinary thing to be sailing thus towards the unknown with people whom he hardly knew; but Russians are not disturbed by such unimportant facts; he ended by clearly recalling all that had occurred in the last two days, and looked around for his violin-case. It was within hand's reach, and in a safe place; then he was anxious about his brother. Neither Victor nor little Hélène were in

the saloon; Démiane ascended the gangway which led on deck, and the first object which struck his eyes was a white silk neck-handkerchief which he had seen the day before, and which, for the moment, covered Mademoiselle Mianof's head. She was talking with Victor, and they both seemed very much engaged.

"What are you plotting there?" said Démiane, stepping behind and surprising them.

Hélène blushed and smiled, and Victor began to laugh.

"We are thinking of turning the boat into a linen-shop. Mademoiselle Hélène proposes to occupy the leisure hours of the voyage in mending our clothing, which has great need of it."

"Ah! bah!" said the young artist, indifferently, as he sat down on a folding-stool, which he had been in search of. "Leave such trifles alone. Fingers are made to play the piano or violin!"

"Mamma and myself would have no dresses for a long while," said Hélène, smiling, "if I adopted your principles, Monsieur Démiane!"

"What do you think of the voyage?" continued the latter.

"I am pleased with it, ah! yes, very much pleased! How many times have I not looked at the boats descending the river and asked myself if some day I should not do the same! It was my dream, Monsieur Démiane! I am going now towards my promised land!"

"Really? What is the name of your promised land?"

"It is the Caucasus," said Hélène, clasping her hands together. "I have dreamed of the Caucasus all my

life. It seems to me that if I could see it, I should die without regretting anything!"

Démiane, who was troubled, rose and took a few steps on deck. The morning wind beat against Hélène's white silk neck-handkerchief, and blew from time to time in her eyes the little locks of brown hair which curled softly on her forehead. The young girl's eyes, which were turned to the south, looked as though they would pierce the horizon and divine in the distance the snowy peak of Kazbek. He looked at her with that sort of kind pity which sensible people feel for poets.

"Where have you acquired this love for the Caucasus?" he asked.

"In Lermontof," she replied, with some confusion; "I have read and re-read his verses on that beautiful land, and I dream about it always. Do you not love it? would you not like to go there?"

Démiane made a brusque movement.

"Would you really go there if I asked you to do so?" said he, with a singular expression.

"I—I will do anything you wish," said Hélène, with a childlike submission.

"We will go, perhaps," continued Démiane, "I have thought about it for a long time."

"You have never said anything to me about it!" exclaimed Victor, much astonished.

"It is an idea that I had in my own mind," the young artist replied, coldly. "I think there ought to be something to do there. Artists cannot go there often—it is so far away."

"It costs a great deal," observed the practical man, the banker of the troupe.

“And one can earn a great deal of money there,” replied Démiane, triumphantly. “Moreover, it is only a visionary plan.”

After a warm day, the night came down little by little on the widened stream; the right bank, which is high and abrupt, became almost black, while the other, which is low and covered with meadows, seemed still to retain some of the brightness of the vanished day. The silver stars began to stud the sky here and there, towards the blue zenith, and a grey-pinkish fog rose slowly from the horizon, obliterating the lines and confusing the sombre masses of the distant forests. Of a sudden, at a turn in the stream, the young people, who were standing on the deck, uttered together a joyful exclamation.

“Fireworks!” exclaimed Démiane.

“An illumination!” cried Hélène.

“The port of Nijni-Novgorod,” said the Captain, as he passed behind them.

The Volga in this place is a mile and a quarter wide; the Oka, which joins it there, divides into two streams at its mouth, and separates the town into two distinct parts. The cliffs on the right serve as a shelter for vessels of all sizes, and on the opposite side the old town spreads out its girdle of crenated ramparts, its many-colored towers and its churches, which are as numerous as they are small and varied in their architecture. The falling night hid the forms and only let one see the outlines of the towers and gardens on the still clear western sky, but the port was a wonder. Each of two thousand vessels anchored in the immense gulf

carried a white lantern on the tops of their masts which were of various heights; the signals for navigation were marked out by red or green lanterns, and the bridge which united the banks of the Oka, was illuminated by innumerable carriages, which formed a chain of light between the two towns, which are so different in form and in appearance.

No words could describe the effect of the lanterns suspended in the air on invisible masts, and which seemed to change their places as the steamboat slowly advanced towards the port; the combinations of these aërial lights were changed every moment, charming the eye without fatiguing it and making a spectacle that was perhaps unequalled in the whole world. The near approach of the annual fair occasioned the large number of vessels, some of which had come from the most distant eastern tributaries of the Volga, and brought with them Tartars who were half civilized.

Amid a hundred other ships and with many steam-whistles, which the echoes of the banks repeated in the distance, the boat made itself a passage and landed near the bridge of the Oka. Our friends disembarked and found themselves in the centre of a bustling crowd, of many diverse elements, in which no single man was dressed like another, and where they heard all the languages of the East spoken, and even Russ!

"It is a dream!" said little Hélène, clinging to Victor's coat-sleeve. "It is like a tale of the Arabian nights."

"Take care of the Forty Thieves," said Madame Mianof, in French; "for you can count them by thousands here."

From their hôtel, which overlooked the suburb where the fair is held, the travellers had the strange spectacle of that vast, absolutely black space, for they never light it in any way. Crowning the stream and the river which were illuminated with lights, the silence of this town, which is dead at night, and so noisy and bustling in the day, contrasted singularly with the animation of Nijni properly speaking, which at that season is scarcely ever still except an hour or two every night, just before the sun rises. They went to bed and their slumbers were cradled by the distant sounds of the strangest instruments.

The first concert, which was promptly arranged, was not a particularly brilliant one; our friends who were entirely inexperienced in the art of advertising, thought it was sufficient to present their letters of introduction to the enlightened amateurs of the town. The latter gave them their aid, but the season was not a very favorable one, people were only interested in the approaching fair, and their receipts were small.

"You should have addressed yourselves to the large merchants," said one of those who had helped them in their unsuccessful concert; "they are rich, and if you could have said something to them which would have flattered their patriotism, you would have been sure of success. They are tired of German musicians; you ought to have made them understand that you are real Russians ——"

"Real Russians!" exclaimed Victor, "indeed we are! even to the violin, which is Russian!"

The amateur made them tell him the story of the violin.

“Well,” said he, “your affair is settled. Put into your advertisement that Monsieur Markof will play on a Russian violin, which was made in Moscow by his brother Victor Markof, and then go this very evening to the Moskovski-Traktir,* where you must play something on the violin, with the proprietor’s consent, who will be delighted, and you will have a full house on Sunday.”

All this did not please Démiane very much, who disliked trickery.

“I am not good at beating the big drum,” said he; “I am good for playing anything they may wish, but to make an advertisement of myself with what I consider as sacred ——”

“You must not give concerts in the provinces then,” said the amateur, kindly.

“I will beat the big drum,” exclaimed Victor, with unusual vivacity; “I must be good at something! You will play, Démiane, and I will have the advertisements printed; you can trust yourself to me!”

“Don’t forget the newspapers,” said the amateur.

“All that will belong to my department; and you, my king’s son, will only be obliged to present yourself before the public, and to charm its soul.”

Therefore, in one day, Victor, who was always very active, became amazingly shrewd. This metamorphosis, which is less astonishing in a Russian, than in any other, on account of the instinctive prudence and the commercial spirit which is innate in those of his nation, had been in readiness for a long time in

* Restaurant of Moscow.

advance, and had only been delayed from the want of favorable circumstances.

Victor had for a long while meditated about the rôle he would be called upon to play with his brother; he had realized the latter's indifference to external things.

Démiane knew nothing about the washerwoman's bills; but on the other hand, when he was obliged to pay her, he exacted a receipt from her, which at first had alarmed the poor woman, who was ignorant of the art of writing, and was convinced they would send her to prison on account of the piece of paper, signed with a cross. Victor had said to himself that all his life henceforth should be devoted to visiting journalists, treating with the owners of concert-rooms, hunting up artists, etc; and the time seemed propitious for him to enter upon his new career.

Towards eight o'clock in the evening, the two brothers entered the Moskovski-Traktir, a superb restaurant, where the merchant aristocracy meet. There is scarcely any nobility at Nijni: the few neighboring land-owners who try to pass the winter there, remain under their tents and bear themselves with dignity. The true population of the city, excepting the employés of the government who do not so much despise the merchants with whom they have business every day, is composed of the great chiefs of commerce. They are men who wear a caftan of dark blue cloth, a fur cap, and knit gloves in winter, and who in their small shops in the bazaar, when the fair is opened, turn over millions of chests of tea, whole caravans of precious furs, tons of Siberian golden ingots and bushels of

pearls. These people realize their commercial, as well as their personal worth, and wish to be treated with proper consideration on account of it. They know that their retirement from business, should they take a fancy to wind up their affairs, would be a disaster to their country. Without ambition, for they wish neither rank nor brilliant positions, they limit themselves to owning everything: railways, manufactories, canals, mines and capital; and go tranquilly through the streets of their *wooden city*, bowing to each other half-way down to the ground when they meet, and keeping the strictest discipline in their families.

A notable part of this *élite* of the population is gathered every evening at the Traktir to take tea. Some dine there—the widowers and the bachelors; the married men frequent it between their three o'clock dinner, and their nine o'clock supper. There, they arrange their business, make *rendezvous*, and sometimes they even change the prices of merchandise, and during this time, the waiters, who are agile and quiet, run from one table to another, in black velvet trousers, which are half covered by a shirt of red cotton material for the head waiters, and white ones bordered with red for the others; their hands are clean, and they serve without an apron or napkin. Their steps cannot be heard on the thick carpet that covers the floor; and a kind of solitude is assured to each person by the arrangement of the tables, which are separated by partitions as high as one's shoulder, and two hundred people take their repasts and arrange their business without making any more noise than a flock of partridges.

From time to time an inspector who is placed at the end of the handsomest room, judges when the moment is propitious for regaling the guests with a little music, and pulls a small string. A magnificent organ eighteen or twenty feet high, then bursts forth with a wonderful peal and plays the most brilliant pieces from the most celebrated operas, and above all, "*Le vie pour le Tsar*," which is as popular in Russia, as *La Muette* was for a long time in France.

Our friends began by ordering some choice viands among the most expensive dishes and paid for them at once, according to the custom. Then Victor carelessly laid on the table the violin case, which was quite new and shining, and which attracted the attention of his neighbors. After a few moments, a large man, clad in the finest cloth, which was cut in a long caftan, after the antique fashion of the merchants, approached the young men and sat down near them.

"Permit me to ask you," said he, "if there is a violin in that case?"

"Yes," replied Victor, seizing the opportunity by the horns, "and a good violin, a Russian violin, the first that has been made in Russia, and out of Russian wood by a Russian!"

"Do you play it?" said the merchant without suspecting the humiliation he was inflicting on Démiane by this simple question. Every individual who attains celebrity, even in a small way, imagines at once that his name and face are known throughout the universe, and he feels a bitter disappointment every time he perceives how much of the universe has remained a stranger to his renown.

"It is my brother who plays," said Victor, proudly pointing to Démiane. "A Russian artist also; yes, gentlemen," said the hunchback, addressing himself to the crowd which had formed itself by degrees around him; "we wish nothing except what is national! For too long a time have we sought in foreign countries our instruments, our artists and our professors; Russia possesses all that she needs in herself, and we do not wish to borrow anything more from people who, after all, are no better than ourselves."

"Was it you who gave a concert the other evening?" said a new-comer who had observed Démiane's handsome face on the threshold of the Concert-hall.

"It was I," replied our friend, who was rather ashamed of the flourishing speech to which his brother had just given utterance.

"You played some music that was not Russian?" observed the critic.

"It was for the Germans who are here," replied Victor at once. "You are not in need of Germans in Nijni! You are not in need of anything, moreover; your city at this moment, is the *rendezvous* of the whole world."

A murmur of applause ran through the ranks of the audience, which had now become crowded.

"Imagine," continued the orator, "that they have told us a falsehood! It was declared to us that you merchants in Nijni, did not love music!"

"How very stupid!" said a respectable person, with a white beard; "why then should we have that great organ there?"

"Of course, it is stupid," continued Victor unmoved, "but they told us so, and we believed it, and so when we learned the truth, we came here to ask your help. Is it possible that you would refuse to aid a Russian artist to procure himself a Russian public? We wish to give a second concert, and this time we will play only national music; we should never have done anything else!"

The affair thus begun could not fail to succeed; all the merchants who were present offered their help in various ways, and Démiane in order to reward them for their good will, showed them the famous Russian violin and played them a brilliant improvisation on popular themes, which delighted everybody.

On returning to their hotel near ten o'clock, they hastened to knock at Madame Mianof's door, to inform her of their success; little Hélène went on tip-toe to open it for them. Her mother was sleepy and they must not disturb her. A conference took place in the half-lighted corridor, and was promptly concluded by these words that issued from the room in a doleful tone:

"Hélène, come and scratch my back, I can't go to sleep without it."

"Directly, mamma," replied the young girl. "When shall we rehearse?" she asked Démiane.

"To-morrow at one o'clock, in the large room of the town-hall. Is your mamma in the habit of having her back scratched?"

"She never goes to sleep without it," said Hélène, disappearing, at another order from her mamma, which was less doleful and more imperative.

Victor and Démiane returned to their room, and the former on the way there expressed this irreverent reflection.

“I am not astonished that little Hélène should have agile fingers; if she has passed her life in scratching her mother’s back, they must indeed have gained some flexibility.”

“Bah!” said Démiane, “there are a great many persons who have the soles of their feet scratched in order to go to sleep!”

Victor shivered all over, as though they were the soles of his own feet that were being scratched, and then shrugged his shoulders.

“Well, all the same, we have a concert on hand that begins well!” said he. “Who would have said that I had the making of an orator in me?”

Démiane smiled condescendingly. He was nothing loth to have a success, provided he was not obliged to prepare the way for it. He was a *dilettante* in pride.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

FARTHER STILL!

THE *Russian* concert succeeded beyond their hopes. The journals had talked about it, the merchants had endorsed it, and the wives of these gentlemen, who never leave their domestic hearth, had obtained permission to make use of the tickets their husbands bought, which occasioned an unusual activity in the town. Démiane had the pleasure, which was probably rare, of seeing before him a feminine audience entirely composed of *douchagreïkas* in silks of the most brilliant colors, with heads surmounted with kerchiefs, one end of which hung down their backs, while the two others, folded closely together under their chins, were joined on their breasts. And it must not be supposed that all these good souls, who were torn from the obscurity of their homes, did not know how to appreciate the young artist's talent! More than one among them, in listening to him, recalled the time when as a young girl, she had listened to the nightingales answering each other in her parents' garden. The aspirations of their youth returned to their minds, and if their eyes were moist with tears, it was not perhaps, only on account of a nervousness produced by the trembling of his bow on the strings. In the simple themes of the popular songs a melancholy poetry is hidden, which can be appreciated by those alone who have lived a contem-

plative life in the fields or in the old Russian homesteads, and who have loved it and felt its old-time beauty.

Little Hélène, who was attired for the occasion in a plain, white muslin, with her hair divided in two braids which fell on her shoulders, which were modestly covered with a simple thin muslin *fichu*, received an ovation. She was so simple, so childlike in manner, that all the mothers in the audience were touched with pity for her.

"So young, and already earning her living!" said these good souls to themselves.

Before the day was over, she found her room filled with presents of all kinds; the matrons who had been touched by her grace and her seriousness, sent her all manner of things: pieces of stuffs, old-fashioned jewels, pieces of fine, white linen, to make underclothing, a box of oranges, and a fur pelisse; so much in fact that she was obliged to buy a trunk.

"Ah! Monsieur Markof," said she, when Démiane went to say good-morning to her, "I owe all this to you, I shall never be able to pay the debt!"

With a very noble wave of the hand the artist disclaimed any expectation of gratitude, and only smiled; decidedly the little girl was very charming. He did not know whether she were pretty or not—to have been sure of that he would have been obliged to have looked at her more attentively than he had yet done;—but she had an appreciation of the proprieties of life which rendered living in common with her easy and even agreeable. Madame Mianof gave but little

trouble; with tea, cigarettes and cards, they were sure to have perfect peace with her; she did not even exact that they should play cards with her; in her calm, sleepy state she preferred to play *patience*, which leaves the mind free to stop its calculations when the combinations become too exciting. People are not liable to disease of the heart from playing *patience*.

Victor was delighted. The happy success of this enterprise seemed to promise him a series of concerts in the future which would be finer each than the other, and by which D miane would become illustrious and rich. They had, moreover, resolved together to send Father Kouzma a little souvenir in the form of some money, and this resolution gave them a calm joy which, in spite of what may be said to the contrary, accompanies generous thoughts. The two brothers vaguely felt that from the moment their sister held the purse-strings, their father could not roll in gold. So, Monsieur Roussof was commissioned, the next day, to remit discreetly to the priest the relatively large sum which his sons sent to him; it was done in a way to satisfy everyone, for without having said anything about it, they well understood that the gift was to be sent and accepted in silence, under the penalty of immediately losing its value.

The letter which bore the souvenir from Kouzma's children to the paternal home, crossed one written by Monsieur Roussof, which brought surprising news to the young men. The physician of the baths at Piatigorsk having died suddenly, his place had been offered to Val rien Moutine, and after some hesitation, the

young physician had accepted it. Without doubt, it was hard to be thus banished from home for several years, but the salary offered was considerable, and in the end the wealth which the presence of rich invalids brings to watering places, would permit the young couple to realize in a short time, a competency which would be very like a fortune. They had, therefore, decided to leave M——, and when Monsieur Roussof wrote they were already half way on their journey.

Démiane read the letter and became thoughtful. Superstitious as is almost every one, he saw in this coincidence of departures for the Caucasus, a mysterious force which urged him also towards the mountains of the South.

“Madame Moutine is going to Piatigorsk,” said he to Victor when the latter returned from his morning errands.

The poor fellow’s arms fell. He seldom saw the idol of his youth, but she was not so far away and it seemed to him that it was possible to see her should he wish to do so very much; but to the Caucasus! in a distant country! The tears came to his eyes at the thought.

“Would you have us go and see her?” said Démiane half smiling. His brother looked at him with astonishment. He had long ago quite forgotten the Princess Rédine’s letter and could not find any cause whatever for this mention of the Caucasus to which the artist now referred for the second time.

“So far?” said he faintly, as though he were combating within himself the desire of going to join Groucha beyond the Caspian sea.

"Why not? She goes there, and many others as well! We will not be the first explorers of a virgin country," said Démiane, with his eyes cast down, and playing with the envelope of the letter. "We will give another concert at Saratof, another at Astrakhan, perhaps,—if the sturgeon fishermen are fond of music—and we will remain half the summer at Piatigorsk. I am sure there is a good orchestra there; only think! it is the summer residence of the Grand Duke, the Governor General of the Caucasus! There is a mine of gold in that place."

Victor was much surprised at hearing his brother talk from this practical point of view, he who ordinarily occupied himself so little with business, but his surprises never lasted very long, thanks to his unconscious philosophy, which made him accept all accomplished facts with resignation.

"Then, you wish to go to Piatigorsk?"

Démiane ceased playing with the envelope; his hand, which rested on the edge of the table, trembled slightly and then remained motionless. He looked within himself and decided his life. They tell us that we sometimes hold our destiny in our own hands, and that at certain hours it belongs to ourselves to choose our path. It was true at this moment with regard to the young artist, and he felt it, not confusedly, as it sometimes happens, but very clearly. He knew that in approaching the Princess, he was breaking with his past life; he had realized that this woman, whatever her real feelings might be, had manifested no ordinary interest in him; he said to himself that perhaps she had forgotten him; but he was sure of not being indifferent to her

on the day when she should see him again. Should he throw himself headlong into a new passion or remain tranquilly in the beaten track, to wait till chance might come and draw him from it? Démiane had in himself as much of the calculator as of the poet, and the two roads seemed equally dangerous: his twenty years, the memory of the Princess' eyes, of her magical voice, of all her bewildering and fascinating person, gained the upper hand, and in a firm voice, he said:

"I wish to go to Piatigorsk."

"It is an excellent idea!" exclaimed Victor. "For my part—"

He stopped suddenly, and, in quite a different tone, said:

"What will we do with little Hélène?"

"If she will come with us as far as Saratof, I shall be very glad; it is a town full of enthusiastic musicians; there must be a good harvest to glean there. After that, she will be free to return to her home."

"Or to come with us?" suggested Victor, timidly.

He was attached to the young girl; the idea of leaving her so soon made him sad.

"Or else to come with us!" replied Démiane, indifferently. "She accompanies very well, and she is not in the least in the way. It is just as though we were still alone."

"Only our socks have no more holes in them," remarked Victor, "and that is certainly something."

"Is it she who mends them?"

"You do not suppose it is her mamma?"

The two brothers laughed, and thus the journey to Piatigorsk was decided upon.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ANDRÉ'S TRIBULATIONS.

“MY dear friends, you think me in Moscow, occupied in making violins or even altos, and further, in my leisure moments, that I am perfecting Petit-Gris' education? It is a mistake! I dwell on the banks of the Don, and I have found my pastures and my buffaloes again, but not my steward, for the good man is dead, and behold me, at last the proprietor of the property which my poor dear uncle—may God have pity on his soul!—believes me to be in possession of since the day of his death. I have said to myself more than once that the ancients, who discovered Lethe, were not so stupid after all; if in the other world one remembers what one has desired during one's life time, and if one can see the way in which others conduct themselves in regard to one's last wishes, one must get into a very bad temper; and then what is to be done with the eternal delights of Paradise? But it is not in order to discuss this question that I have taken up my pen, but it is to tell you of my annoyance.

“Yes, my friends, I am the most annoyed man on the face of the globe, and the cause of my annoyance is sixteen years old, and has blonde hair—which is always in a tangle—blue eyes, which are always full of tears, and red hands and bare feet, which walk in the dust and seem to ridicule my boots most bitterly.

“Imagine that my old thief of a steward had a daughter. I think I have entertained you before with an account of this original person, who built himself a cathedral with my cheese and who nourished me parsimoniously with the waste bits of his work, and I think I even told you that he had some sort of child or other. This daughter is the young lady described above, whom I found on coming here tuned to the highest diapason and ready to poniard me. The old rogue had left this innocent with the idea that my property belonged to her. That he developed this thought, I do not suppose; it had its birth in Mademoiselle Mouza’s odd brain, and he did nothing to drive it out, perhaps he never knew anything about it. The worthy man died suddenly the other day,—from drinking too much I have been told,—and the law, which is slow in all countries, and particularly so on the fortunate banks of the Don, came in the person of its officers and put seals on what belongs to me.

“‘Seals?’ exclaimed Mouza, ‘what are they? I do not want any of them!’

“They put them on, however, and as one might expect, gave them into the keeping of my steward’s daughter. What might equally have been expected was, that my young savage, who had never heard tape or sealing-wax spoken of in all her life, lost no time in removing all the little strings which prevented her acting as she pleased in her house.

“Pray note well, my friends, that this house was undoubtedly hers, no one during her father’s life time having suggested the contrary to her.

“Thereupon I arrived, and I found the young person on the threshold, and she welcomed me with a: ‘What have you come here for?’ which was not in the least pleasing.

“‘I come,’ said I to her, ‘to take possession of my domain.’

“She laughed in my face and said to me:

“‘You shall not enter.’

“I wished to put her aside, when she drew out a very pretty knife and handled it so dexterously that she cut as nicely as possible a great gash in the palm of her hand. The knife fell, and she began to cry; I wished to approach her and received a hard blow from her fist on my nose, which I still feel when I shut my eyes.

“However, we had entered, which was something gained, and my pretty enemy’s maid, who was better informed with regard to the situation, had dragged my small valise into the house. I was in the heart of the place, but the question was, how to remain there?

“Mouza sat down in a corner, looking at me with a gloomy air, while I was rummaging a little everywhere. The breaking of the seals amused me greatly; and, thanks to my rhetoric, I proved to the authorities that if the little one had acted without discernment, they had not evinced much more in placing them in the keeping of a person as little capable of protecting them as a young unchained monkey; and as I made no appeal, the affair was easily arranged.

“But I had only begun my apprenticeship. When I asked Mademoiselle Mouza what she was going to do, she looked at me alarmed.

“‘Remain here,’ she replied.

“‘Always?’

“‘Always.’

“‘Are you not going away soon?’

“I had less intention of leaving because my property is an excellent one and in good condition. I suspect Mademoiselle Mouza’s father of having placed on his daughter’s head at least thirty thousand roubles, while at the same time he was refusing himself nothing.

“The old man had a notary—a lawyer—in a word, a man of business, whose paw he had very well greased during his lifetime, and who takes care not to say more than is necessary. I sent for him in order to escape from this dilemma. He told me that Mouza had enough to live on from her mother’s property—her mother was a peasant—and that she could go wherever she pleased. She has no relations, no friends, and no acquaintances whatever.

“‘Will you take her away with you,’ said I to the notary.

“‘I ask nothing better,’ he replied, winking his mind’s eye, ‘my wife will take charge of her, and I will look after her fortune.’

“But when it came to a question of leaving, Mouza clung to the door, declaring she would rather die than leave the old house.

“‘Let her remain,’ said I to the notary, who did not seem pleased. Mouza threw me a look that was half-sullen, half-grateful.

“The idea that I am the master will doubtless enter her head some day; in the meanwhile her maid does

my house-keeping, for you will easily understand that I have not brought any servants with me.

“Mouza occupies the left wing and I the right; we have got as far as eating together, thanks to the maid’s persuasions, who did not wish to cook two different meals and who won her cause—and I ask myself how long this is going to last?

“This, my dear friends, is how I am situated at present, and I would much like to see you in my place! Write me what you would do if you were in a similar predicament; not that I expect the least help, your experience of life not being superior to my own; but the stupid things you will tell me, will perhaps throw some light on my mind. At all events I cordially clasp your hands.

“Your friend,

ANDRÉ LADOF.

“P. S.—I forgot to tell you that from henceforth, my wants being taken into consideration, I shall be as rich as Cræsus. If, in your travels, you can come and make me a visit, I hope by that time that, through some miracle of our excellent Providence, I shall be delivered from my bare-footed kobold.”

The perusal of this letter made Démiane nearly die with laughter. The thought of seeing his friend André, who was so positive, so skeptical and so philosophical, at war with this little girl who was as intangible as a will-of-the-wisp, seemed to him extremely comical.

Victor, who was less given to raillery, thought Ladof was very much to be pitied. Madame Mianof was

rather indifferent to this story, as it did not concern her directly. However, she played several games of *patience* in order to discover whether Ladof would get rid of his domestic imp, and the cards being consulted having answered "no" as many times as "yes," she ceased to question fate in regard to a thing that was so little worthy of interest.

Little Hélène took the matter differently.

"The poor child," said she. "I understand that her mind must be all upset! Her father was very culpable not to have given her more proper notions about the future which was in store for her."

"It was, you see, because he did not expect to die so suddenly," said Victor with a naïveté which provoked the mirth of all present.

"She must be dreadfully unhappy!" continued Hélène, folding her little hands over the sock she was mending; "she has lost everything at once: her father and her property, since she thinks it belongs to her, the loves of her whole life—it is a complete destruction of all that surrounds her, nothing is left her but ruins! I pity her very much—very much!" she repeated, as she shook her head and took up her work again.

"You reason like a little woman, Mademoiselle Hélène," said Victor; "where did you learn all that?"

She smiled and shook her head again. Since her departure from Jaroslav, she had not been so sad, but perhaps more solemn. A new responsibility had entered into her life, since she had become the accompanist of Démiane's concerts. Little Hélène had one

of those souls to which every thing is serious, and who never look upon any duty whatever, without a sort of alarm at not being able to perform it properly.

"We leave to-morrow, do we not?" said she to Démiane, who was looking vacantly out of the window.

Victor arranged all the details of their life, but she always addressed herself to Démiane, without thinking that she did so.

"To-morrow?—Yes. Have you decided to come with us?"

Hélène looked at her mother, then at the sock she was mending, and then at Démiane again.

"If it will not incommode you," said she hesitatingly.

"As far as the Caucasus? Think well about it, it will be for the whole season."

"If it will not incommode you," she repeated, in a sad and submissive tone.

"Incommode *mé*! There can be no possibility of it. I have repeatedly told you that I shall never have such an accompanist as yourself. It depends entirely on you."

"Let us go there, Hélène," said Madame Mianof, as she shuffled her cards, which would not mix properly.

This conversation had taken place at Saratof where our friends had passed a week in a musical orgie, of which the amateurs of the place were not yet weary; but the artists felt a real need of rest after this excess of harmony. It was the place where they would be obliged to separate, if they were not positively to take the route together for the Caucasus.

“As you wish, mamma,” replied the young girl, as she busied herself in mending a very small hole in the seam of the sock.

“Then, Victor, go and secure four places,” said Démiane, turning to his brother; “the boat leaves to-morrow morning.”

“All aboard, travellers for the Caucasus!” cried Victor, waving his hat triumphantly above his head.

Since the feminine element had been added to their society he was wonderfully happy. Little Hélène reminded him of Madame Moutine, he kept constantly saying, in order to explain his delight. To tell the truth, there did not exist the least resemblance between the two young women: Groucha was tall and imposing; Hélène was short and slender; the former’s face was round, a little flat, and remarkable for unusual fairness of complexion; the latter’s was oval, with a clear olive paleness; and they differed in everything else, and yet Victor insisted on proclaiming their resemblance. He was right on one point, and that was something which the others could not see: The sweet gentleness in the two young women’s eyes, the tender compassion of their look, the kindness of their smile, and a great wealth of patience and of resignation, gave to both of them a similar expression; it was not their faces that resembled each other, but their souls.

When the evening came Démiane went to take a turn in the *Assemblée de la Noblesse*, where a soirée was given; he wished to say good-bye generally to all those who had shown him kindness during his sojourn at Saratof. The ladies and Victor remained at home

in order to make the preparations for their journey. Just as the latter was going to close the trunk which contained their effects, he saw H  l  ne enter the room with her arms full of underwear. She looked embarrassed and her voice was unsteady.

"Monsieur Victor," said she, "I want to ask you something."

"I am at your service, Mademoiselle H  l  ne."

"I want you to put this in your brother's trunk."

"We have only one," answered Victor, na  vely.

"I would like him to use these shirts which are here. But you must tell him that it was you who had them made for him!"

Victor examined the underwear, which the young girl had laid on the table near the light.

"What magnificent linen!" said he, with astonishment. "It is as fine as cambric! What does this all mean?"

"Well, you see," said she, overcoming her embarrassment, "a lady at Nijni gave me a piece of linen to make me some underwear, but I have no need of any, and then it is too handsome for me! While a young man, an artist, can never be too well dressed; so I had a dozen shirts made here; they work very well at Saratof. I think they will fit him very nicely."

"How can you know that?"

"I took a pattern when I was mending the underwear," stammered H  l  ne, who was as ashamed as if she had been caught in the act of theft, — "and I suppose these will not fit any the worse?"

Victor looked at the young girl, who shunned his

eyes; then suddenly he caught her by the shoulders and kissed her heartily on each cheek without her trying to repel him.

“O! my sister H  l  ne,” said he in a voice full of emotion, “we love our D  miane well, do we not? We are ready to make every sacrifice for him in order that he may be happy?”

She made an affirmative sign with her head, and two burning tears which she could not restrain ran down on her hands, which Victor had grasped.

“You love him as much as I do,” continued the young man, who was seeking eagerly on the young girl’s face what she was endeavoring in vain to hide; “and I have loved him from his cradle—You play with him, and for him, as you play for no other; I have heard you accompany amateurs, and it is not in the same way! He is a god in your eyes, is he not, my sister H  l  ne? You would like to tear your heart from your breast and put it under his feet, to keep him warm when he goes out in the snow? You love him both as your child and as your master, enough to forgive him for never having looked at you, for not knowing when you are present, and for not suspecting that you love him?”

She nodded her head forcibly, and her tears fell faster and hotter.

“I know very well how people love,” continued Victor, who was suddenly enlightened with regard to what was taking place in his heart by the pain he felt; “but I am only a poor hunchback, and I have no right to love. We will both love him, will we not, sister

Hélène, and when he is unhappy, we will be the ones who will console him, who will heal the pain that others may inflict upon him !”

“Yes,” said Hélène, in a low voice; then, freeing herself quickly, she hid her head on Victor’s shoulder, who gently caressed her stray locks of hair.

“It is agreed,” said he, when after a second she raised her head and wiped her eyes. “I will tell him, it was I who had the shirts made for him.”

“I beg you to do so,” she murmured, with the most touching look.

“And he will not know what you have done for him; that is right! that is the way to love.”

CHAPTER XXXV.

CLÉOPATRE'S PRINCIPLES.

THE music was playing in the garden of the Bathing Establishment at Piatigorsk, and those of the invalids whose health permitted them to walk about, were enjoying the beauty of the afternoon. The blue shadows of the great mountains descended on all sides into the valleys, where the sun had thrown its beams even into the beds of the streams, and their coolness refreshed both plants and men, after the heat of a July day.

Though one may be in the Caucasus, in one of the most beautiful countries, a hundred leagues away from the West and from the life of the world, a watering place is never anything but a watering place. People wear the same costumes there, and bring with them the same vices, and carry thence the same impressions, that they would from any watering place in France or in Germany. What does it matter after all that the delicate faces of the Tcheremesses, with their black mustaches and gazelle-like eyes, should have replaced the flat visages of the *kellners* or the pomade-covered heads of *garçons*? Who looks at the faces of these docile objects of common necessity, and who looks at the landscape, after the first two days, when it is agreed that every one should be enthusiastic about nature?

And, apropos, people are unaware, perhaps, how very dangerous it is not to be enthusiastic about nature at the hours and on the days when it is proper to be so. Evil be to the person who, preoccupied with some sorrow, some physical or moral suffering, neglects to celebrate the splendor of the stars of night or the charms of the forests, when others think it is right to be enraptured with them. The unfortunate man and poet who, with liberal hands, should have poured the overflow of his soul into his pictures, into his music, or into his poems, would be accused of having a cold heart, of remaining indifferent to the beauties of nature, and of being apparently enthusiastic through a frightful duplicity only, and, to use a word of Parisian slang, of "doing the *chic*," which all are aware is the utmost degree of ignominy.

The Princess Rédine, on the first day of her arrival, and even on the next day, had sung the obligatory hymn to the old mountains; this formality when accomplished set her mind quite free, and she at once organized her household on the most proper footing. She lived in a beautiful villa, ornamented with sloping gardens, with rocks, springs, trees, lawns, and whatever constitutes an aristocratic dwelling. She gave good dinners three or four times a week, showed herself very severe on the subject of women, and only admitted to her house those distinguished for virtues, which were proved either by their age, or their ugliness, or else by an insignificance which sheltered them from all suspicion. In the way of men, she received almost every one, for the very simple reason that it is easy, by a

thousand pretexts, not to receive a man any longer, whom one does not wish to see, whereas with women, one makes for oneself many bitter enmities by adopting that style of behavior. The Princess Cléopâtre at Moscow would only receive the women of her own society, and the practice of this principle made many poor little wives of officers and functionaries pass many solitary evenings, as they were banished from the Eden where a dress-coat alone had the freedom of the city.

The Princess Cléopâtre had just been overlooking the installation of the Prince in the shadiest, the coolest, the most perfumed place in all the garden of the Bathing Establishment; it was a duty which she entrusted to no one else. The Prince had some good cigars within hand's reach, and his own valet-de-chambre ready to satisfy all his demands; further, he looked as though he were quite contented with his lot, and it was therefore allowable that his wife should take a moment of respite, after having displayed so much zeal for the well-being of her husband. So she went about quite easy in her conscience, with the indifferent manner which was peculiar to her, and with that dignity of carriage and of manner which placed her far above all criticism, whether favorable or otherwise. Count Raben walked by her side; they scarcely spoke, having said too much to each other for a common-place conversation to interest them.

The position Count Raben held vis-à-vis to Cléopâtre was a singular one; she had characterised it herself one day in these words:—"You came too early on this earth, or else I came too late; you have gained worldly knowledge, and you judge me before loving me, which is something I cannot permit."

"Do you wish people to adore you with their eyes shut?" the diplomatist had asked.

"*Mon cher*, when people adore, it is always with their eyes shut; not only are yours always open, but you make use of an eye-glass besides!"

It was perhaps this eye-glass which prevented Cléopâtre from accepting the Count's sighs. The latter moreover had not sighed in the ordinary sense of the word; the court which he paid the Princess strongly resembled a planned battle; and he felt in addition that if he were ever to triumph, this would be the only way in which he would have any chance of succeeding. The young woman respected his cleverness, which she felt was at least equal to her own, and even occasionally she was a little in dread of her adorer's piercing eyes; they treated together as Power with Power. Could they ever have loved each other, it would have been in order not to hate one another; and as they did not yet love, there was every reason for supposing that they hated.

Raben had arrived only within a few days, but he did not need so long a time as that in order to dissect from their head to their feet, both body and soul, the people who made up the society of the watering-place. His critical humor had stopped before two alone, Valérien Moutine and his wife. The latter had been there only a short time, but Groucha's calmness and the physician's noble assurance offered no material for gossip.

"Do you receive those people?" Raben asked.

"One is always obliged to receive the physician of a

watering-place," the Princess answered; "he is very nice — I will go and return his visit one of these days."

"The physician's, or his wife's?"

Cléopâtre shrugged her shoulders.

"I am not speaking to you about his wife," said she; "a physician's wife does not exist."

"One exists enough, however, to defend herself if you should try to take her husband from her!"

"Do you think so?" said Cléopâtre with a haughty accent. "I would like much to see her!" she added with a disdainful laugh.

"Come, Princess, leave that nice little couple alone to add a number of quarters to their honey-moon! Should you destroy that happiness, would you gain much by it?"

"I care much for other persons' happiness!" said she with contempt. "Other people's happiness! what an interesting thing it is!"

Raben looked at her from under his eyes; and she continued proudly:

"You think me cynical? Do you dare to say that in a hundred individuals you could guarantee me one who does not feel the same? Yourself first, particularly you! The only difference between all the world and myself, is that the others hide it from hypocrisy, and that I tell you so plainly, from frankness."

"That frankness, Princess, might also be called cynicism," said Raben in a voice as soft as silk.

"Cynicism, well! That is better than hypocrisy!"

"Certainly!" said the diplomatist with exquisite courtesy. "What surprises me — can I say it to you, Princess, without incurring your wrath?"

“You can say anything that you choose,” she replied with the disdain that was one of her originalities; “after all the disagreeable truths we have said to each other, I do not see why you have any need of precaution!”

“It is habit!” said Raben to excuse himself. “Well! dear Princess, what surprises me, is your respect for the truth, your —”

“Cynicism!” said the Princess tranquilly.

“It is you who said it this time — should limit itself to professions of faith; it is that you should care so much about the proprieties of life, and that you should be such a perfect wife to the Prince —”

She stopped, and putting her nervous, supple hand on the diplomatist’s arm, clasped it so hard that she hurt him.

“If all the world had our strength, *mon cher*,” said she, while a delicate blush mounted to her pale cheeks, “it would be too beautiful! It is with intelligent people that one must throw away the mask and act as one thinks; but the world is composed of idiots, who are incapable of judging, who are capable at most, of gathering themselves together like frightened sheep and of leaving an empty space around a black one — which is black because it has not put its feet in their footprints, and hidden its opinions as they hide their vices. The world is stupid, *mon cher*, and that is why I tell you what I think, and why I hide from them what I do.”

She withdrew her hand and the blush disappeared quickly from her cheeks. The haughty expression

returned to her lips and she smiled with the superiority of a woman who has never had a master.

“Do you blame me for it?” she went on, as she continued her walk, “you, whose whole life is a falsehood.”

“It is diplomacy,” said Raben, smiling. She shook her head with scorn.

“You lie from habit,” continued she, “from taste, and to form your character probably, though by this time it ought to be formed or never! How many times have you told me that you loved me—and with what a pathetic tone.”

“Ah! Princess, I have long since renounced the pathetic tone. It never moved you!”

“Nor did anything else come to pass! All that is false! You hate me; I do not love you very much, and we are the best friends in the world. Did you not come here expressly to see me?”

“You are worthy of all homage!”

“Journeys included—Come, *mon cher*, let us leave each other alone. I will not interfere with your diplomatic duties. Permit me to live as I please.”

Raben bowed: the discussion was ended. They continued walking in the gardens, meeting from time to time an acquaintance, and exchanging a bow without stopping. The Princess never stopped to speak to any one; she thought it vulgar in the extreme. Suddenly, as they approached the orchestra, Raben put on his eyeglass, and, without changing his voice, without showing the least surprise, said:

“You are worthy of all journeys, Princess, most undeniably; there is some one who has come from Moscow, expressly.”

Cléopâtre followed the direction of his look and perceived Démiane. Standing, with his back turned to the orchestra, he was scanning the crowd with the earnestness of a man who does not wish to make a mistake. The person he was looking for, was evidently not the Princess; he had assured himself at the first glance that she was not there; it was for some indication of her presence, the face of some one in her *suite*, some one of those whom he had seen when she left and whom he was sure not to have forgotten.

“He is a handsome fellow,” said the diplomatist, who was still calm. “Did you tell him to come?”

She made a negative gesture and put on her eye-glass to examine Démiane.

“He is handsomer than ever! What are you going to do with him, Princess?”

She turned her back on the crowd and took the road to her villa, without any one’s having noticed her presence.

“It is agreed, Count, that we will not meddle with each other’s affairs,” said she to him, with her calm and rather drawling voice.

“Unless it should be for our greater mutual good!” he concluded, “and never without permission.”

“That is how I understand it,” said she as she pushed open the little gate of her garden.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DÉMIANE FINDS HIS MAGNET.

FOR two days Démiane vainly endeavored to see the Princess; the latter kept invisible. She quickly found out who composed the little troupe; she thought Hélène ugly and insignificant, and assigned to Madame Mianof a role of great usefulness, or rather of great uselessness, and looked down upon Victor as a common *impresario*, whose sole thought was to show his company in the best light. The young artist was superior to his surroundings, which the Princess royally disdained from all the height of her own haughtiness, which was increased by the humility of others. Démiane's appearance had made a sensation in the society of the place, and every one declared that he was as handsome as Apollo.

Démiane cared but little for the opinion of the ladies; it was the Princess whom he alone wished to see; soon after his arrival he had learned more from M. and Mme. Moutine perhaps, than he wished to know in relation to her. Valérien withheld from any too direct criticism about her; but, in the young physician's prudence Démiane, although inexperienced, had discovered a mistrust, about which he felt as hurt as though it concerned himself personally.

He mentally accused Valérien of allowing himself to be influenced by false reports and calumnies to which

a man of his character should not have listened. Madame Moutine spoke of the Princess only with the greatest reserve; she evidently desired that no word coming from her lips, whether good or evil, should be repeated to the star of Piatigorsk. This caution on the part of his two friends increased Démiane's impatience and inspired him with silent anger towards those who attacked his idol—the same anger which he had before felt towards Ladof, but this time he was not destined to be enlightened by the bright and caustic wit of his friend.

At last, on the third day, as Démiane, who was chafing at his curb, was walking to and fro for the tenth time on the road before the villa Rédine, he saw a wheeled chair, pushed by a servant, appear at a turn in the garden; and beside it, shading the happy and drowsy Prince with her parasol, which was lined with rose-color, slowly walked the Princess Cléopâtre bending over her husband from time to time to speak to him with an enchanting smile. The old invalid roused himself and answered his protecting fairy with a dull smile, and then began to look at the trees he was passing in the avenue, as though he were afraid of not being able to count them.

“What an excellent woman!” thought Démiane who was fascinated by this scene, and then in defiance of propriety, he stopped near the iron fence, like a beggar, and waited till chance should bring the pedestrians closer to him, before stepping aside, should it be necessary.

The wheel-chair and the parasol took several turns

around the lawn; then, leaning over the Prince, Clépâtre seemed to ask him his advice about something. Here, or there? her hand seemed to say, as it pointed in turn towards the park and the road. The old man made a vague gesture, and immediately the little carriage rolled toward the iron fence with extraordinary rapidity. Démiane scarcely had time to walk away a few steps and to return, in order to pass before the gate as the chair came out from it.

His heart beat very fast, as, with brows contracted by emotion, and with gleaming eyes, he endeavored to assume an easy air, but Démiane was dreadfully pale, in spite of his boldness. However, he executed so adroitly the design he had planned that the little carriage nearly came full upon him as it turned into the road. He drew back a step and did not dare to raise his eyes, thinking himself ridiculous, but he was not timid, and his hesitation did not last the thousandth part of a second; he raised his head and looked the Princess full in the face.

“To the right or left?” said the latter, addressing her husband, without noticing Démiane.

With an indolent air, the former made some indifferent movement, and the carriage passed before Démiane, who was amazed.

What, she did not recognize him? It was hardly worth while to have travelled five hundred leagues to meet her, if she did not remember his face! Had she forgotten the soft glance she had thrown him with that *thanks*, which accepted the homage of all the violinist's youthful passion? If she had forgotten it, if Démiane

had only pursued a dream, were the calumnies then true? Was this woman playing with the love she had inspired? Were men only jumping-jacks whose grotesque movements amused her for a moment, and which she threw away after having broken their strings?

Our friend was not patient; the blood rushed to his face, and he was perhaps about to call to the Princess when she turned half round, as though struck by a remembrance, and her half-closed eyes threw a strange look at Démiane.—“I think I know you,” said the look, “but I am not sure; tell me discreetly whether you have seen me before, or whether you are only a stranger.”

Démiane’s eyes returned the plainest answer to this question. Then the undecided look became suddenly fixed and a gleam shone in the black pupils.—“I recognize you,” said the gleam, and then the near-sighted eyes closed together immediately, and the Princess stopped. Under the reflection of her crimson-lined parasol, her complexion and her magnificent hair assumed a remarkable brilliancy; she looked like a superb rose that opens itself unblushingly to the mid-day sun.

The carriage stopped.

“Monsieur Markof?” said she, with the haughtiness that was one of her provoking charms.

Démiane bowed in silence. He could not answer, for his parched throat would not allow him to utter any sound.

“I thought you were in Moscow,” said she in her slightly drawling voice; “have you come here to give concerts?”

He could do nothing but bow again.

"We will play some music together, if you would like to do so," said she, with a perfectly queenly motion of her head, which also resembled a bow; "I receive this evening."

She turned again towards the Prince, who was grumbling, impatient at the delay, which, however, was so short. The little carriage began to roll forward again, making the gravel on the newly macadamized pathway grate, and the rose-colored parasol was held with a playful tenderness in the direction of the sun over the old invalid's head, while the Princess fearlessly exposed to the sunshine her dazzling complexion, which had no fear of tan.

"I am ridiculous!" said Démiane suddenly to himself, with an inward shudder; "if she looked back, she will take me for a runaway from college." And he turned from the group which was disappearing.

He would have liked much, however, to have seen her look round, and he stopped on the road more than once in the hope that she would think of him, and that she would throw him another glance backwards; but he did not perceive one. The Princess never looked back, neither in the street, nor in life.

When he returned to the hotel, he told his friends, with assumed indifference, of his meeting, and asked them their advice with regard to the way he should act. Would it do to go to the Princess' that same evening, or would it be better to wait till the next day? Victor and Hélène thought it would be better to go that evening; Madame Mianof was rather inclined to the next

day; but it was so hot! It was probably the heat that took away all her courage for others as well as for herself; at least, so Victor said.

"I will go to-morrow," Démiane declared decidedly, to end the discussion.

But in the evening, towards eight o'clock, he walked around the drawing-room several times, looked out of the window, said it was stifling in such small rooms, that he did not understand how people could remain shut up in that way, and that as for himself, he was going to take a walk.

"Let us all go!" exclaimed Victor. Madame Mianof preferred to remain at home; Héléne went to get her hat, and Démiane passed into his room with a solemn step. The friends waited ten minutes, then fifteen, and then Victor, who had grown impatient tried to go into his brother's room, but he found the door locked.

"Well, Démiane, what are you doing?" said he as he knocked.

"I am dressing myself," answered the young man.

"That's scarcely worth while!" murmured Victor, "it's as dark as a cellar, and the way in which they light this place might be much improved."

He went to rejoin little Héléne, who with her hat on, seated near the window, was looking at the stars forming diadems on the neighboring mountains. He grumbled, but she, who was always calm and grave, made him see that it was of no use, so he became silent, and contented himself with looking at the stars also.

After another quarter of an hour, Démiane made his

appearance ; his summer overcoat hid his dress, he held his hat in his hand, and as the drawing-room alone was lighted, no one thought of remarking his white cravat.

“ At last ! ” grumbled Victor. They left, and their walk naturally took the direction towards the end of the town ; for they could not find coolness or solitude within it. They then went towards the outer boulevard, that was bordered by villas, whose trees hung over the walls and threw their black shadows on the road. They walked slowly, a few steps apart from each other, and were enjoying the calm coolness of the night. This coolness was particularly sweet to H  l  ne, who discovered in it a secret affinity with her own nature. They scarcely spoke to each other, each one being absorbed in his own thoughts ; H  l  ne was enjoying her realized dream. To have reached the Caucasus and to have contemplated the snowy summits of the high mountains ; to be walking thus under the stars, bathed in the perfume of the great pines and the roses blooming in the gardens which never smell so sweetly as at night ; to have D  miane quite near to her, within reach of her hand and her voice, was all that she asked from life, and provided this dream would only last long, she would claim no other happiness of Fate.

Victor was calculating in his mind the advantages which this sojourn at the watering-place would bring to them all, both from a moral and a material point of view. In the first place it was assuredly something to have kept little H  l  ne with them, whose presence added so much peace and sweetness to their lives. Since their conversation at Saratof, neither he nor she

had ever made any allusion to their common secret; but he had looked deep enough into his own heart to appreciate what this calm and silent young girl had become to him, in so short a time. He knew that she loved his brother, and it was perfectly natural she should do so. Was not Démiane above all a man made to be loved? Ought not his beauty, talent and superior intelligence win all hearts to him? And little Hélène, who shared with him the daily bread of music, who became intoxicated from the same sacred cup of harmony, was she not appointed by fate to share his existence? Some day or other, Démiane, who was visibly indifferent now, would appreciate the modest treasure which he overlooked, and the happiness of the two young people would know no obstacle.

It was the thought of this happiness, the painful looking into himself, which apprised Victor how much his heart had been influenced by the young girl's melancholy grace. But to what could his dream lead? Was it not already a great deal that his deformity did not inspire Hélène with repugnance towards him, that she permitted him in joke to call her little sister? He well knew that no woman could feel any love for a poor unfortunate creature like himself; but would not the happiness of those whom he loved be his joy? Certainly! And yet, the good fellow had felt scalding tears run down his cheeks at the thought of that happiness. But the sacrifice was made, an easy sacrifice, thought he with irony, since he sacrificed what no one had given him. It was therefore much to have brought little Hélène to the Caucasus with them. In this

daily intercourse, Démiane's eyes would at length be opened. In a material point of view, it was very fortunate also, for the two young men were learning the French language quickly and correctly with the two ladies, a language that is indispensable in good society; and then, the expenses were proportionately less, and the concerts could not fail to be excellent.

The pedestrians had brought their reveries with them as far as the gate where Démiane had waited so long in the morning, and they came suddenly back to reality, when the latter said to them in a deliberate tone of voice :

“Return alone, my friends, I am going to the Princess’.”

“Going to the Princess’ !” exclaimed Victor ; “but you can only go there in a dress-coat.”

Démiane smiled confidently without replying.

“That was why you were so long in dressing yourself then, mysterious gentleman ! Why could you not have told us so at home ?”

“I had not decided about it, and then, am I obliged to tell you everything I am going to do ?” said the artist in a piqued tone.

“Ah ! Heavens ! no !” said Victor sadly, “you are not obliged to do anything. Good-night.”

“Good - night, Monsieur Démiane,” said Hélène’s sweet voice.

He repeated her words in a brusque way and entered the garden ; the gate was wide open ; and as they were watching him going away, a carriage drawn by two horses nearly ran over them as it turned to enter the

gateway. They simultaneously seized each other's hands and took the road to their dwelling.

"Have you seen the Princess?" Hélène asked after a moment.

"No."

"Is she young or old, ugly or handsome?"

"She is young and handsome," answered Victor ;
"at least I have been told so."

Hélène sighed.

"We are of very little account to him," said she sorrowfully ; "now he is going into the world!—"

"It is necessary to go into the world in order to give concerts," observed Victor.

"Yes, but—it is not the same thing."

They returned home sad and down-hearted. Démi-ane had cut the wings of their dreams.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE FETISH.

WHILE his friends were returning to their home, filled with melancholy, Démiane did not make a brilliant appearance at the Princess' ; his name, which was carelessly announced by a *valet-de-pied*, did not seem to strike any one, neither did his face. Four Generals of a respectable age were playing a game of *préférence*, a fifth was awaiting his turn. The Prince, who was seated in a wheeled arm-chair, which was less ample but more elegant than the one he had used in the morning, was presiding over a table that was especially laid for him, and which was covered with sweet things which he ate slowly, with visible satisfaction ; two old ladies threw an indifferent glance on the new-comer who was neither titled nor commissioned, and the Princess, who was surrounded by charming men, most of them belonging to the military, seemed only to pay slight attention to the young artist's call. After the first words of politeness, and two or three introductions, she occupied herself no more about him, and divided her attentions between the old Generals and her husband, who was eating enough bonbons to kill him, and from whom she took his plate, in spite of his protestations. She poured him out a cup of tea, assured herself that he was drinking it properly, then passed near the card table, gave some advice to one of the players,

sat for an instant between two old ladies, and then returned to her circle of young men.

Raben then entered without being announced, like a friend of the family, and the Prince saluted his appearance with the longest phrase that he had uttered during the day.

"Delighted to see you, Count. Are you well?"

After which the old parrot looked around for his plate of bonbons, and, not finding it, to console himself, took a second cup of tea, that was poured out for him by the *valet-de-chambre*, who was attached to his person, and who, from the next room, watched all his movements.

After having kissed the Princess' hand, and exchanged a few words with each person, Raben sat down in a *bergère*, neither too near nor too far from every one, and gave himself up to a disguised but attentive examination of D miane's person.

"He makes a good figure in a silly situation," thought the diplomatist; "it is a good sign and speaks in his favor. How bad she must be to make him play that *r le*! After all, she probably hopes to make amends to him for it soon."

This thought inspired Count Raben with the desire of making the acquaintance of the happy fellow for whom so many compensations were reserved, and he rose to join him; but the Princess passed in front of him and threw herself in a large arm-chair that was quite close to the one on which D miane was sitting.

"Well played!" said Raben's eyes, in response to a look of malicious defiance which his beautiful friend

threw him; then he went towards the Prince,—it was an infallible means, as he knew, of preventing the Princess from continuing long her conversation with the young artist. The number of things in which she did not believe was almost unlimited, but she had a blind, absolute faith in a fetish, a *porte-bonheur* which she wished to keep for herself alone; this fetish was her husband.

When she was a young girl, the Princess Cléopâtre had known sorrow; the man whom she first loved, he who perhaps might have won an irresistible influence over her, had not even deigned to recognize the love with which he had inspired her; she had spent years in overcoming her feelings sufficiently to be able to speak to him smilingly, as people speak to each other in society; she had gained so much control over herself that she was accused of detesting the man; in truth she did detest him; she had passed from love to hate, as one passes over the water on a bridge, without a shock, without reluctance; assured of being disdained, she wished now but one thing: the death of him who, without knowing it, had thus humiliated her. It was in this trial that she had gained all her energy; she had, moreover, gained in it a great disdain, and a great contempt for humanity, which is so stupid.

Then she had married the Prince, who was twenty-five years older than herself, and many millions richer, and her life had changed its character. All the happiness that luxury can give, all the independence that contempt for men can bestow, all the success that a great name and a high position brings had suddenly

fallen around her, making a litter for her pride and her caprices. The Prince, who was wounded eighteen months after his marriage, had passed through a dreadful illness in which his mind had been shattered. From the day when cured, but counted out of the number of living beings, he sat on the terrace of their palace to devour sweets, which alone henceforth gave him any enjoyment, the Princess Rédine felt a fierce delight as she looked around her.

“Everything belongs to me ! all that life can bestow,” she said to herself. And in truth, she possessed every thing that the earth produces that is most exquisite and most rare—all, except the love of an honest man ; but this mattered little to her for she did not believe in it.

On the other hand, she believed that her husband, in the state to which he was reduced, was the visible providence of her life : through what crack in her skull had this idea penetrated into the Princess’ powerfully organized brain ? It matters little ; but it was on account of this that she was a good wife, and that she had no interest that did not yield to that of satisfying all the childish wants of the foolish old man ; she held so much to his life that she had the courage and patience to resist for hours any gluttonish caprices of his that might endanger his precious existence. She took him to walk, amused him, put him to sleep to the sound of distant music every night, and left her drawing-room to inquire whether his slumbers were not disturbed.

On seeing Raben approach her fetish, the Princess made a gesture of impatience ; she had a vague dread

of what he might say, and of what the other might understand. This was the sword of Damocles in a happiness that would have been too insolent without it; this woman who feared nothing, was in dread of an awakening in her husband's mind; she knew the Count was clever enough to rouse in him at times, fugitive returns of memory or intelligence, which caused her an uneasiness that she could not overcome; she feared in such an awakening an attack which might end in death—and the Prince must live. While she was addressing a few insignificant words about art and poetry to Démiane, her look never quitted the wheeled chair. Suddenly she rose and took two steps toward the Prince, thus interrupting his conversation.

"My dear," said she to him with charming grace, "here is Monsieur Markof, a young man of remarkable talent, one of our future glories; knowing how fond you are of music, I begged him to come and see us; I am sure you will be grateful to me for it! and to him also.—The Prince, my husband," she added, half turning to Démiane, over whom she threw her magnetic glance. Then she passed slowly in front of him, and the folds of her heavy silk dress, which was loaded with trimmings, rose almost to the young man's knees, then fell and followed her at a distance on the Persian carpet which was woven in soft and quiet colors.

"Music," said the Prince, "I like music."

After this effort, he buried himself in his chair much pleased—he almost always had a satisfied look. Démiane, who was much embarrassed, did not know what to

reply. Raben came to his aid, offered him a chair and took one for himself, and immediately, the simple young man thought he had found a friend.

After half an hour, Raben rose, and Démiane judged it was time to retire. He approached the Princess, who received him amiably and indifferently.

"When would you prefer," said she to him, "that we should play a little music together?"

"Whenever you please, Madame," said he, quickly become joyful.

"In the morning, will that suit you?"

"Certainly."

"To-morrow — no; day after to-morrow morning, at ten o'clock, will you come?"

He bowed and withdrew at once.

"Still a little awkward," said Raben carelessly, when the young artist had disappeared, "but he has a good amount of assurance — and then one gets over awkwardness with time — and with lessons."

"He is a little young," replied the Princess. "But youth is a charming defect — one gets over it also — with time."

But Raben continued to smile. Epigrams glanced from him. He had fired off so many at others, that they had no more sharp points for him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DÉMIANE AWAKES.

DEMIANE had played with the Princess for a week, and every time that he returned home, he was utterly down-hearted. He lived no longer except in this woman, from the air she breathed, from the flowers which her hand grazed as she passed them, from the folds of her dress which touched him sometimes and which made him thrill from his head to his feet. He now scarcely ate, pretending he had taken tea *down there* — down there, was the villa, which he no longer called otherwise — he practised no more on his violin, which he left on the end of the grand piano, and passed his days in smoking cigarettes, with Madame Mianof; these two persons did not mutually disturb each other: one being in her somnolent state, the other wrapt in his feverish revery, they passed hours without addressing a word to one another, and without making any motion.

After a week of this existence, Hélène and Victor, who were very gloomy, ended in not speaking to each other any more, nor did they even look at each other, fearing to understand one another too well. They had seen the Princess when the music played, at the Casino, and the same certainty had torn the veil from their now understanding eyes. Victor recalled the singular scene when Ladof had been almost obliged to use authority

in order to bring Démiane back to reasonable feelings, and then a thousand incidents of their journey grouped themselves together in his mind and he understood that the Caucasus had always been the goal of their musical journey.

From the first time he saw her, the Princess had inspired him with a deep and unreasonable antipathy: the beauty of this woman had no influence over his simple soul, and he had declared she was ugly, but in confidence and to Hélène alone. Cléopâtre produced upon him the influence of a siren, of an evil-doing and mythical being, who would necessarily swallow up Démiane some day, should he allow himself to be led away; and how could he be prevented from throwing himself into the wolf's jaws! And then his heart was wounded at the silence of his brother on this delicate subject. He thought he had a right to his confidence.

Hélène had not said so much to herself: she did not know why they had come to Piatigorsk, and if she had been aware of it, it would not have changed her feelings very much. Démiane loved that woman, was not that enough? She did not share Victor's opinion; who was more worldly, and better enlightened in regard to modern customs. She recognized the Princess' unquestionable superiority, her strange beauty and her fascinating manners, and the abyss into which the poor young girl fell when she compared herself to this brilliant star, was only the deeper.

Hélène had no great resources to call upon where her feelings were concerned; she neither knew how to, nor could she struggle with such a rival; she only wept.

Dark circles formed around her eyes, and her face grew slightly thin. She was a hundred times prettier, and only Victor perceived it.

One day, instead of coming home about twelve o'clock, as he generally did, Démiane made them delay breakfast for him ; after an hour our friends decided to take their repast without him, and as they were finishing it, he entered, carrying his head high and with a triumphant look in his eyes.

"We are going to give a concert next week," said he laying down his hat gravely, on an empty plate. "Are you ready, Hélène?"

It was the first time that he had omitted the word *mademoiselle*, and this involuntary mark of familiarity comforted the little pianiste's sorrowful heart.

"I am always ready, as you well know!" said she joyfully.

"I do not speak with regard to your piano," continued Démiane, wisely. "The question concerns your toilette. The concert will be very grand. His Imperial Highness will do us the honor of attending it with his suite."

"Highnesses!" said Victor, with a tragi-comical motion. "Must I take off my hump!"

"That joke is in bad taste," said the artist, with a very elegant gesture of disdain, which he had lately learned at the villa Réline; "but Hélène can adorn herself, she ought to do so, in order to do honor to the grand public."

"And to you!" said the young girl, raising her honest eyes to her idol.

He deigned to smile kindly, and his look fell on his modest accompanist to assure himself that she would not really shame him in the society of so distinguished persons; he had doubtless learned how to appreciate pure lines and delicate contours, for he started with surprise.

"Why," said he, "you have improved wonderfully; I no longer recognize you! with your clear complexion, your hair, your smile. Do you know you are very pretty?"

Hélène smiled and raised her head with a little very natural pride.

"I did not know it," said she; "but I am glad that it is so, glad that it should be you who tell me so."

"Will you please see the little coquette! You wish people to pay you compliments, then?"

"No, Monsieur Démiane," replied the young girl, casting down her pretty eyes, which showed confusion, "it is because no one ever told me so before."

"You must not spoil young girls," said Madame Minof who, inspired by the feeling of duty that is grafted on maternal prudence, thought it necessary to interfere; "young girls should be ignorant of the natural advantages that nature has bestowed upon them, and above all, not take any pride in them. What dress must my daughter wear at this concert? I ask your advice, Monsieur Démiane, because, as you go into fashionable society, you know better than ourselves.

"I know absolutely nothing about it!" Démiane declared in all sincerity.

"But you see ladies at the Princess'."

"They are old ladies. That has not the least connection."

"The Princess herself?"

"Oh! the Princess—it is not the same thing. She dresses like no one else!"

Hélène stifled a sigh, and Victor repressed a movement of impatience.

"I do not suppose, however, that she wears her bonnets in the way of slippers," said she, in a sour tone.

"No, she does not go as far as that," replied Démiane, who was too happy that day to take in ill part what he considered as a joke.

"You have surely some dresses, Hélène, show them to me."

"I have not a single nice dress to show you," replied the young girl timidly; "I shall be obliged to have one made."

"A white dress?" Madame Mianof timidly suggested.

"No, no," said Démiane eagerly, "not white, it is too much worn."

Hélène and her mother looked at each other perplexed. They did not know that white being the Princess' favorite color, the young man did not wish to see any one else wear it.

"Have you not some pieces of silk from Nijni?" he suggested.

"Ah! that is true! I had not thought of them," exclaimed Hélène, running to her trunk.

She plunged her pretty little head into its depths and returned gayly, with her arms laden with the most

remarkable materials, woven in the most brilliant colors, which were very suitable for covering elegant furniture.

Our friends burst out laughing at the sight of this rainbow display, took a real pleasure in shaking out the heavy brocades and making them shimmer in the light. They were perfectly inadmissible for toilettes. However, underneath them all, H  l  ne found a light grey material, dotted over with little *broch  * stars woven in gold-colored silk; it was odd, but very pretty, and the young girl pointed it out with her finger to her judge, with some timidity.

"That is very nice," said the latter; "we must see what Madame Moutine will say about it."

Madame Moutine had conceived a friendship for H  l  ne. At first she had been a little troubled in regard to the two women with whom her friends had encumbered themselves, she was anxious about their morality and the plans they might have in view, but she had promptly reassured herself; she did not certainly quite do justice to Madame Mianof, whom she thought less worthy of esteem than she really was, but little H  l  ne had inspired her with a tender sympathy that was mingled with an endless compassion for the poor little creature who was cast so early, and so alone into all the difficulties of life. She thought the material very pretty and wished to procure a dress-maker for H  l  ne.

"No," said D  miane rather embarrassed, the "Princess wishes her maid to make the dress."

H  l  ne, who was humiliated, hung down her head.

She did not wish to be under any obligation to that arrogant Princess, even for the making of a dress ; but Démiane insisted upon it and she was obliged to yield. The maid came and carried away the material, and told her mistress all that the latter wished to know ; after which the noble lady bestowed no more thought upon the little pianiste than she did on the benches in the concert hall. Her maid had told her that she was ugly.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

VICTOR ANGRY.

“UGLY?” said Raben in a low voice, when the day for the concert having come, the young girl appeared upon the platform. “Those who told you so had not looked at her! What hair, what eyes, and what a pretty, sweet and delicate face! That Démiane is a lucky rogue!”

“Eh!” said the Princess turning towards him with a gleam of fury in her strange eyes.

Raben smiled calmly and put his eye-glasses on again.

“See, yourself, Princess, how she divines his least intentions, how she follows the motion of his bow; he does not think any more about the piano than if it did not exist; it is she who watches over everything and who seems to be a part of the violin itself. One must love a man dearly to identify oneself with him in such a way!”

“Pshaw!” said Cléopâtre who had regained her coolness which had been disturbed for a moment, “there is no love in that, it is simply mechanical.”

“Do you think so? Look; they applaud her hero, and it is she who blushes with pleasure. Have no fear that she will take the least particle of his triumph to herself! She does not even think that she has a right to any praise, she enjoys that which the enthusiastic

crowd—brought here by you, dear friend—lavishes on the man she loves. And that innocent, timid, happy look which she throws on him just as he takes up his bow to begin again, is that not love? But after all, I am wrong, perhaps, to take you as a judge in this; it is a kind of love that you cannot understand, a stupid and commonplace love that lives of itself and expects nothing from the loved one!—fools love in this way; but you are too clever—”

“Take care,” said the Princess in a very low voice and with the most charming smile,” do not banter me, for I might desire to get rid of you—the Techerkesses of these mountains do not think much of a man’s life.”

“You would not dare to do so,” replied Raben, with the same calmness, “you know that I can be very useful to you, my devotion is too precious to you—But how admirably we both understand joking, do we not?”

She smiled and her smile disclosed her fierce, white teeth. H  l  ne, who was looking at her stealthily as she played, felt such a shiver pass over her when she saw this expression on her face, that she missed a note. A very slight, but almost brutal sign of impatience, escaped D  miane. She cast down her head humbly and applied herself with all her might to play her best.

“It is true,” said Cl  op  tre, “she loves him in her sheepish fashion; but he does not love her.”

“How could he love her? He has something very different in his head! To him, she does not even exist!”

The Princess smiled again, but her face had changed its expression, and wore for the rest of the time the look of peaceful satisfaction of a woman who adores music.

When the concert was over, Démiane received the congratulations of several distinguished personages, and felt himself at last lord of the land. It was a success which he owed to the Princess. He wished to tell her so, and to thank her, but she had disappeared in the gardens. A little vexed, he returned to Hélène, who was arranging the music; she had already laid the violin in its case, and Victor held it under his arm, ready to leave.

"Are you coming?" said the latter, turning towards the door.

Démiane shrugged his shoulders angrily.

"Would not one say that I cannot go out alone? For God's sake, leave me in peace! It is intolerable to be watched over like this!"

At the first words of this speech, Hélène left the hall; with her long train caught up by her left hand, and with a little *bachlik* of white lace on her head, she walked slowly in the garden, which was deserted at this hour, when every one returned home for dinner. The sun hid itself behind the trees, but then she did not fear the sun any more than the Princess Cléopâtre. She walked with her head cast down, going round the garden-plot and waited for Victor, who for the first time in his life had just answered his brother sharply. Her sense of justice told her that Démiane had well deserved some reproaches, and yet like a mother who

weeps as she chastises her rebellious child, her heart bled for the guilty one. Suddenly a rapid footstep made a noise on the sand; she raised her eyes, and saw before her the Princess Rédine, who stopped.

"Mademoiselle Hélène?" said the noble lady, with kindness.

"Yes, Madame," replied the young girl, bowing slightly.

"Would you kindly play a little this evening at my house, if Monsieur Markof is not too tired, of course? Do you think he can come?"

Hélène looked the Princess full in the eyes, and answered in her clear, sweet voice:

"I am sure he will be happy to obey your commands, Madame."

"And you?"

"I accompany Monsieur Markof whenever it pleases him to ask me," replied the young girl, without haughtiness, but also without cordiality. After a very short silence she continued:—"Since I have the honor of speaking to you, Madame, permit me to thank you for the trouble you took in sending me your maid —"

"The dress fits you very well," said the Princess, as she examined her rival from her head to her feet; "it is a little odd, but very pretty."

"Madame is very kind," replied Hélène, turning away her eyes.

Cléopâtre looked for an instant longer at her who thus received advances from a lady of rank, then she bowed to her haughtily, and went away. She felt wounded without knowing wherefore, for nothing

either in the young girl's words or manner could give her a pretext for any irritation. She consoled herself by thinking that this little savage was badly brought up, and she promised herself that she would teach her better manners, if an occasion to do so should present itself.

At the same moment, Victor hastened towards H  l  ne much excited, and led her away across the garden to the place where the carriage was awaiting them.

"The violin?" said the young girl, on seeing that the precious instrument was not in the little hunchback's hands.

"Let him bring it!" said he, as he sat down in the carriage, whose door he shut angrily; "let him bring it and let him return on foot! I will not act as his servant! Neither shall you, H  l  ne, you shall not mend his linen any more; he is becoming intolerable with his haughty airs: he has caught them at the Princess', as one catches an illness! And it is worse than the plague, most assuredly! But I am his elder brother, and I will not allow him to snub me! From to-night—"

"To-night we are going to the Princess'," said H  l  ne, putting her little supplicating hand on the arm of this avenger of birthrights; "I implore you, my good Victor, do not scold him to-night; he will play badly, and you know the harm that might do him! He has sensitive nerves—"

"The devil take his nerves! I have some as well, after all! And you, have you none?"

"My good Victor," continued H  l  ne, "I beseech you, if you love me, don't say anything to him, it is

only a hard moment to pass through; he will come back to us, he loves us—”

At these words she burst into tears and suddenly covered her face with her two hands. She felt so deeply that he did not love her! The carriage stopped, she wiped her eyes hastily with her little handkerchief, and jumped out with a calm and resigned air. She had long since learned how to assume this expression. But who, on account of this, would have dared to have accused her of hypocrisy?

CHAPTER XL.

LITTLE HÉLÈNE REVEALS HERSELF.

THE Princess had invited to her house that evening all the best society in Piatigorsk; she well knew that whenever a day has been marked by some event that people's nerves are more excited, their minds are more animated, that men are cleverer and women prettier, and it seems as though every one has an excess of vitality, which is a rare thing in ordinary existence; so she threw open her drawing-room almost regularly on such occasions. There was no need of a particular invitation; two large illuminated lanterns at the garden railing, announced to people that there would be a reception at the villa Réline, and all those who had usual access to it, knew that they could present themselves.

Démiane went there with Hélène. He would have preferred to have gone alone, but he had arrived at that period of his fascination when the least desire is a command. Until then he had floated in the most vague uncertainty; there were times when he dared to hope everything; but he oftener fell from his heaven an instant afterwards, called back to reality by a disdainful gesture, an absent smile, or a freezing look that threw him into the most despairing doubts. His complete moral servitude vis-à-vis to this woman, being taken into account, whom he loved passionately, and to whom

it was impossible for him to address one word of love, he could in consequence only obey her caprices. He arrived there about ten o'clock, anxious and discontented, but firmly hoping that this evening would bring about a good result for his future. The calculator, which in Démiane went always side-by-side with the artist, whispered in his ear that his presence among so many great personages could not fail to make him useful acquaintances; our friend knew too little of the world to understand that in inviting Hélène to come with him the Princess had meant to send him back to the rank of a simple artist, who had come to delight her guests, and not as a friend who was received on an intimate footing.

Certain women, whose principles are assuredly not more narrow than were those of the Princess, and who do not evince any more severity in the practice of them, can love men who are inferior to them in position. Queens have been known to marry shepherds,—and even not to marry them at all, which was something still more embarrassing. But they make a sort of code of honor for themselves, which obliges them to elevate as much as possible, and to bring near to them in position at any cost, him who has known how to win them over to his cause. This need of building a pedestal for the man they have chosen, is a sort of rehabilitation to them; it is even an unconscious avowal of their weakness, and shows a desire to repair it as far as is possible, or at the least, to excuse it. The Princess felt nothing similar to this, and that was what distinguished her from all other Delilahs; she did not desire to see

him who pleased her, great; what was the use of it? what could she have gained by it? On the contrary, should the chosen one become so, he might perhaps arrogate some rights to himself; the Princess was satisfied that they should possess a gilded mediocrity, a modesty full of charms, that would attract no one's attention either to themselves or their history. But she had taste, and never looked twice at a fool, though he should be as handsome as Antinous.

She received the two artists with incomparable grace; never had Démiane obtained so many kind words from her before; it is true, that Hélène received almost as many for her share, but it is easy to suppose that people are kind to our friends for love of us, and this was what our modest artist did not fail to say to himself.

"I wished," said Cléopâtre, as she conducted them to the piano, "that the Prince, who was deprived of the concert a little while ago, should have his small share in our artistic pleasure. He would really have been too unhappy to have listened to us talking about such a *fête* and not to have heard the least echo of it."

The Prince grumbled an assent; bonbons and music were the two things he loved most in the world, and then the guests made a circle in order to listen.

Hélène sat on the piano stool, which was really an instrument of torture to her, with a resolution full of despair. Until then she had made a total renouncement of self, forgetting herself for Démiane, only happy in completing his success, and unaware that she might have any individual worth; this worth, she felt that she possessed however, but what was the use of bring-

ing it to light? The necessity of being no longer a shadow, of becoming also a star, became apparent to her at a turn of a pathway, in the garden, at the same time with the Princess.

"They make no account of me," she said to herself; "I am going to prove to them that I am not what they suppose; and who knows? perhaps he will love me better for it!"

At the way in which she played the few bars of the prelude, people looked at each other in the drawing-room. She had not played like that in the morning; who would have believed that the little accompanist was capable of so much precision, of such an individual accent? She continued, and, singularly enough, the talent which she developed was so great that it threw Démiane's momentarily into the shade. He felt it, and a sort of rage arose in his heart:—

"Ah! you wish to play better than I do?" he said mentally, "we will see whether you are capable of it."

It was no longer the submissive accompaniment, destined to enhance the worth of the violin's song: it was a struggle between the two instruments, an impassioned and passionate struggle, in which Hélène had the upper hand, for she was combatting for her dignity, and for her love, while Démiane was only fighting for his pride.

They were overwhelmed with sincere applause—they love music almost to madness in Russia—and the Princess, addressing herself to Démiane, said to him with an accent he had never before heard:

"You have surpassed yourself!"

Raben, who had quietly approached the piano, said to little H  l  ne, in a low tone, while the sound of the other voices covered his :

“You have a wonderful talent ; play something by yourself, you will please the Princess.”

H  l  ne looked at him undecidedly, then turned her glance upon the group which surrounded D  miane, and shook her head.

“No, Monsieur,” said she ; “I came here to accompany Monsieur Markof, not to have them listen to me.”

Raben took off his eye-glass, offered a chair to the little pianist, and stood up before her.”

“I must compliment you, Mademoiselle,” he said to her with as much deference as though he were speaking to the inheritor of a great name, “you give proof of no ordinary tact and modesty.”

She received the praise without embarrassment ; there are hours when the most simple young girl feels herself superior to everything, either criticism or praise ; it is when the happiness of her life is in danger.

“You have a great deal of friendship for Monsieur Markof, have you not ?” continued Raben ; “you ought to advise him not to give himself up to the pleasures of society ; more than one has lost his talent in it, his faith in himself, and many other things besides. Do you understand me ?”

She looked at him, frightened, and made a sign with her head.

“Do not be alarmed, your friend is running the risk of no danger, of no material danger, at least ; but it may come. At Monsieur Markof’s age, one should

work a great deal and not think that one has attained everything, but endeavor to do better, and above all, to live in the bosom of one's family, in a peaceful home, amid pure joys —"

"You have your mother still with you, I believe?"

Hélène made a motion of assent without replying: she felt her heart tighten and did not dare to say anything.

"You ought to form one closely united family — you who have influence over Monsieur Markof —"

"No," she said with gentleness, but in a firm voice, "I have no influence over Monsieur Markof."

He looked at her with increased kindness.

"Try to acquire it," said he, "you will do him a great deal of good — Excuse my frankness, Mademoiselle, I have not the right to speak to you in this way; but at my age, one can consider young girls of yours, almost as children —"

Never had Raben spoken about his age before, and the Princess would have laughed heartily if she had heard this new language. New it was in truth, from every point of view, for Raben himself had just felt at the sight of this young girl a strange emotion which greatly resembled a tender pity. For though one may be a diplomatist, there remains in the heart some springs that are not dried up, and which suddenly burst forth when one least expects it, reviving a freshness which has been thought destroyed. Raben had just discovered one of these springs.

"I pass for a bad man," said he to Hélène, perhaps to excuse his unwonted feeling. "I am one sometimes, but never with children or the weak ones of this world."

He rose and smiled, and went to join the group where Démiane was triumphing, leaving the little pianiste to follow him with an anxious and grateful look.

They began to play again, but Hélène possessed no longer the animation that had so excited her the first time ; she acquitted herself of her task with taste, with talent, but in a way to make Démiane forgive her for the wrong she had previously done. Towards midnight, warned by a glance from Raben, Hélène said to the young artist :

“Is it not time for us to go?” He looked around him, saw that they had forgotten him, and understood that the moment for leaving had come. Approaching the Princess, he wished to address a few words of thanks to her, but she interrupted him without listening to him :

“Till to-morrow at ten o'clock,” said she ; “we will then continue our practising, will we not ? Good-night, Mademoiselle, I thank you.” And she turned her back on them with unparalleled grace.

The next morning, when she awoke, Hélène found in a casket that had been brought to her by the Princess' *valet-de-pied*, a gold ring ornamented with turquoises ; she looked at it for a long time and gave it to Victor, saying to him :

“That will do to make you a scarf pin.”

He wished very much to refuse it, but on reflection, said to himself that they would ask what had become of it, and he put it in his waistcoat pocket without any formality.

CHAPTER XLI.

CLÉOPATRE'S PROTECTION.

TEN o'clock sounded when Démiane, who had not yet learned the great art of not being quite exact, and yet punctual, ascended the steps of the villa Rédine. The anteroom was deserted, the drawing-room also; he walked idly about a moment or two, and then sat down in an arm-chair a little impatiently. Never before had he received such a welcome; the Princess was always there, the ante-room was always full of servants; this morning the house seemed dead.

In a few moments a maid appeared.

"The Princess is a little indisposed, she begs that you will play in her boudoir."

Démiane took his violin case and followed the maid through a succession of differently decorated rooms which he had never seen. Through a window that looked out on the garden, he saw disappearing in the distance in his wheeled-chair the Prince, who was going to seek shade and coolness in the windings of the valley; at length, the last door was reached, the maid knocked twice softly and passed in first, followed by Démiane who stopped on the threshold.

"Pray shut the door!" said the Princess smiling, "you make a draught of air!"

He obeyed mechanically; the maid had disappeared no one knew how, and he was alone with Cléopâtre, in

a room which was rather large, which had a high ceiling, and which was hung in brocaded Caucasian silk, with changing and harmonious shades. Gildings here and there, a beautiful Venetian mirror of cut crystal, an upright piano, some low chairs that were of various forms, composed the furniture. There were vases everywhere, and in these vases enormous bouquets of freshly cut roses which gave forth the odor that is peculiar to these flowers when they have just been gathered,—an odor that soon changes, and which becomes as overpowering as it is sweet during the first hour after they have been cut.

Cléopâtre, half lying on her sofa, and surrounded with floating lace and clad in snowy waves of muslin, with bare arms and her neck half-veiled, seemed overcome by the heat and fatigue. However, it was cool in the boudoir, and she ought not to have been wearied by all that muslin. She raised her eyes to Démiane, who was greatly agitated.

"I am not ill," said she, answering his look; "but I am weary of always being under arms; you will not be displeased with me for receiving you *en négligé*—as a friend? Pray sit down."

He seated himself at a little distance, and was very much embarrassed to know what to do with himself. This kindness, the amiable familiarity of this reception bewildered him. However, he had something to say, that his frank and honest nature could no longer restrain, and he spoke:

"I owe you a great deal, Princess," said he; "you have encouraged, guided and protected me; yesterday

will be a marked day in my life, and I owe it to you. Permit me to express my gratitude to you for it."

Cléopâtre smiled.

"Child!" said she; "what a great child! One can amuse you with a rattle! A little satisfied vanity, is not that a fine reason for gratitude?"

He wished to reply, but she stopped him with a motion.

"No," continued she, "let us talk of something else. Why have you never told me that you are so intimate with Mademoiselle Hélène?"

"I?" exclaimed Démiane, rising, and with the most sincere vehemence; "I do not even know the color of her eyes!"

"She knows very well the color of yours!" replied the Princess, smiling; "although you seem desirous of making me believe you are not so intimate——"

She stopped with a wave of her hand the passionate denial that Démiane had upon his lips.

"You should not allow her to make her affection for you so conspicuous. I understand that in private you would not attach much importance to such demonstrations which are after all, only childish; but in public you should advise her to be more prudent."

"Little Hélène?" said Démiane, thus betraying his disdain for the poor child; "she makes her affection for me conspicuous? Pardon me, Princess, I do not understand!"

"You are not going to pretend," the Princess answered, with a malicious delight in her eyes, "that you do not know that she loves you."

"She loves me? Who? Little Hélène?"

"It is so visible, that I am inclined to doubt the good faith of your astonishment!" replied the Princess, who was delighted with her success.

"She is a silly thing!" exclaimed Démiane, who was divided between the satisfaction to his pride, which the idea of knowing himself loved caused him, and the mortification of having to offer in sacrifice to his goddess so small a thing as little Hélène's love; but one gives what one has, and after all to do that is satisfactory.

"Not so silly!" said the Princess, with so enigmatical a smile, so sweet a look, that Démiane, who had suddenly grown very bold, left his chair and went and sat on a cushion, which was at the foot of the sofa. No one could ever imagine how much self-possession he had acquired in knowing himself loved by the little pianiste.

"She has known how to discover your merits, which is a proof of intelligence. Then you do not love her?"

"Not the least in the world!" exclaimed the artist, earnestly.

"It is a pity!"

"Why?"

"Because—because it does a man credit to make victims."

"Oh!" said Démiane, with a haughty air, that was destined to prove that little Hélène and nothing were quite the same. Emboldened by the Princess' look, he added:

"You know very well that I cannot love any one of those who surround me—"

“You have not yet made me any confidences!” said Cléopâtre, in an ironical way.

“Do not joke with me,” continued he, his lips trembling with emotion. “If you should turn me out of doors, now, it would be very unkind, Princess, very unkind; you know it well—”

She smiled and looked at him again; she had raised herself a little on her elbows, and was quite close to him, with her eyes fixed on those of the young man, as though she were seeking to read in them a page that was still new.

“You are a great child,” said she, almost in a whisper, “a great artist, a man of genius, but a child—what more must one say to you?”

He approached her fascinated; she half closed her eyes and said in a still lower voice:

“And that is why I love you!”

How many others had Cléopâtre told that they had genius? It was her way of convincing them, and it had always succeeded.

CHAPTER XLII.

A ROSE.

DEMIANE passed the rest of that day in wandering about on the mountain: he had need of air and of exercise in order to re-establish a sort of equilibrium in his mind. So many diverse impressions were clashing together in his brain, so many new sensations made his heart beat and his arteries throb, that he could not return home without having meditated on the new turn his life had taken.

What overpowered all else in him, what produced on his artistic organization the effect of a discordant note that was held with a cruel and unsatisfied persistence, was a discontent, a disappointment, which he could not overcome. He had thrown at the Princess' feet, all that was most noble, most generous, most elevated in him, during those two hours of intoxication that he had passed in the boudoir of roses; he had poured his soul, that was overflowing with joy and pride, on the beautiful hands which Cléopâtre had allowed him to kiss with a smile of triumph.

"I will become great through you and for you," he said; "I will compose a *chef-d'œuvre* and write your name upon it! Thanks to you I shall henceforth be a man; yesterday I was only a child; you have given me everything!"

She listened to him without interrupting him, and

seemed happy ; but just as the clock struck twelve, she had sent away the young artist, in spite of his protestations. While he was bidding her adieu, putting all his love in a word, in a glance, in an embrace, she looked vacantly over his shoulder, and this cold look had frozen Démiane's heart. He felt that it was not she who belonged to him, but he who belonged to her ; she had kept herself in reserve, or rather had taken herself back again, and even after those two hours, he felt that he had no more right to her than if he had never entered that boudoir.

This thought irritated him, and at the same time inspired him with a more ardent desire to pass again another hour such as those he had spent that morning ; but the Princess had promised nothing ; everything was left to the chance of circumstance or to Cléopâtre's caprice, and Démiane felt humiliated, after having given himself wholly, not to have gained anything in return.

Nothing ! not even a promise, not one of those words which bind one to another, not even a perfume remaining in his hair, in his clothes ; roses belong to everybody ; in that land of roses, the poorest sewing-woman can have them on her work-table. Cléopâtre was prudent ; for fear of involuntary indiscretions, she never used any perfume except when she went into public.

He walked for two or three hours led by chance, and then sat down on a fragment of rock, under the shade of some scant bushes, in a lonely and desolate place. He saw a plain before him, with a dried-up river running through it, whose bed, sown with pebbles, made a

wide gray furrow in the short grass, that was already turning yellow. He was weary with his wandering, but more weary still with the load that weighed upon his mind.

"She mistrusts me," he said to himself, clasping his head in his two feverish hands; "she has accepted my love, and yet she has no confidence. What have I done to lose her esteem? What enemy can have calumniated me?"

Raben's distinguished and clever profile passed through his mind, and he trembled, thinking that he had made a discovery. Raben displeased him because he was too intimate with the Princess. While saying to himself that she could never have loved him—the diplomatist's forty-eight years seemed so prodigiously old to Démiane's twenty-four!—he found in the evident intimacy of these two persons enough to feed that need of jealousy that lies at the bottom of every lover's heart. He said to himself that Raben must have disparaged him, and he immediately took a dislike to him with that extraordinary discrimination which distinguishes those who are just beginning life.

He said to himself, and he repeated it over and over, that the Princess did not love him. But if she did not love him, why had she given herself to him? This problem was not one of those which Démiane was capable of solving, and as nothing is more humiliating than to confess to oneself that one is ignorant, he tried to delude himself.

"She loves me," thought he, "but she is aware of the usual fatuity of young men, and she hides her

affection from me in order to make me love her the more."

This conclusion satisfied his self-love, and he declared himself pleased with it. His heart still murmured a little, but Cléopâtre was so beautiful, so fascinating, the least word that fell from her lips was so priceless, that he reproached himself for his fancies and took the road to the town in a calmer frame of mind.

He returned to his lodging, prepared for a lecture, for the night was falling and he had not appeared there during the day; to his great amazement, everybody received him as though he had not left them, without any questions, without any surprise. In spite of his surprise he resigned himself to this amiable reception; but towards ten o'clock he could not help rushing off to the villa Rédine. He found the Princess in full toilette, smiling as she usually did, while he trembled inwardly from his head to his feet, as he touched that hand, which, a few hours before, had caressed his brown curls; she said good evening to him with the greatest calmness, and ordered the butler to bring him a cup of tea.

He had certainly thought that she would have some control over herself, but not to this degree; and that she would affect an indifferent manner, but not with that naturalness; and the same sadness which he felt in the afternoon passed over him with a cold shiver. Almost directly afterwards his eyes filled with a soft light, and warmth returned to his heart. The Princess wore a rose at her waist — one of those roses from the boudoir, without doubt — and it was to recall his morning's dream to him.

"You have too delighted a look, Monsieur Markof," said Cléopâtre, carelessly to him, who was remarking him very closely, and who feared some foolishness on the part of this novice in life. "Something very fortunate must have happened to you to-day?"

"Fortunate in truth, madame!" he replied, with a trembling in his voice which caused the Princess a great deal of annoyance.

"He looks like the poor fellow who plays the lovers at the Theatre Michel!" thought she, with vexation. "*Mon Dieu!* how stupid he is not to understand."

"I will wager," said Raben, who was observing them both from the depths of his arm chair, and who had made sure that there was "something new" from the awkwardness and excitement of the young man, as well as from an expression of bad temper which the Princess's lips had assumed, "I will wager that you had a good receipt yesterday?"

"I believe so," replied Démiane, blushing with anger; why did that courtier remind him here that he earned his living by his violin. "I know nothing about it, to tell the truth," he continued, "it is my brother who attends to all that."

"Then the Shah of Persia, our neighbor, must have sent you a decoration by telegraph," said the Princess, "for upon my word! one does not wear a happy look like that for nothing!"

She turned her back on him to go and speak to her husband, and Raben approached him indifferently:

"I went to see you a little while ago," said he to Démiane; and I did not find you, to my great regret;

there will be a concert given for the benefit of the Caucasian wounded; you will be very kind not to refuse us your assistance."

Démiane bowed in silence, and Raben examined him very closely without his eye-glass. This examination satisfied him, without doubt, for he cut it short and began a conversation on music with the young man, in which he astonished him by the extent of his knowledge. Although our friend held himself at a distance, on account of his preconceived idea of seeing an enemy in the diplomatist, he could not help recognizing that a less courteous enemy would have left him to endure Cléopâtre's ill humor; and if he did not bestow upon him much more sympathy, he could not prevent himself from according him some esteem.

CHAPTER XLIII.

DÉMIANE IS TOO EXACTING.

A GENERALLY received opinion gives to every day a morrow; but Démiane's dream seemed destined to make an exception to this rule, for during three times twenty-four hours he could not succeed in meeting the Princess' eyes, except in the most formal and coldest manner. The sense of independence which was carried to a great degree in the young man, rebelled at this sort of slavery in which Cléopâtre controlled his passion, which had been brought to its climax. And a great deal of irritation began to mingle with Démiane's love.

Certain passions flow peacefully, like the streams in the "*pays de Tendre*," between pleasant banks, with a few chance obstacles in their way, such as a bank that is steeper than others, the stump of a tree thrown across them, perhaps innocently, which are intended rather to beautify the landscape than to trouble the current of the river; when such passions overflow, it is in a stream of tears, that do no harm to any one; with a little cambric and a few kind words, peace is soon made. Démiane's love was not of this kind. Still less did he understand submission to the loved woman; in the republican ideas of this revolutionary person who knew nothing of diplomacy, the Princess, in opening her arms to him, had made him her equal. Henceforth there

was no longer the Princess Réline and the low-born, penniless violinist; there was Démiane and Cléopâtre, exactly as there had formerly been Daphnis and Chloe.

This belief might meet with some contradictions; but Démiane did not take them into consideration. So on the evening of the third day he wrote the Princess a fiery letter, in which he accused her of making sport of him, and of not having any heart. On the perusal of this singular love-letter, Cléopâtre, instead of laughing, slowly drew her brows together, and remained buried in deep meditation. This displeased her; she had no idea of giving herself a master, no matter who it might be, and least of all, this unknown musician, who for his greatest claim, alleged that he had passed two hours in her boudoir! Never had such a thing happened to her before in the whole course of her life; but that was because, until now, she had never been loved save by well-bred people, men of the world, who knew exactly what they could say, what they could ask, and what they ought never to exact.

Démiane was not well-bred; he had superficially polished himself with civilization. He knew at the most, how to enter a room and how to leave it, how to talk and walk like the rest of the world; but the undisciplined boy who had fled from the paternal home, rather than return to the Seminary, reappeared at the least blow and roughly pierced through the worldly envelope. It was this element of uncivilization which gave him his originality—it was perhaps this which made the Princess distinguish him with her favors;—but

what was a charm might become a danger, and Cléopâtre, for an instant, repented in great sincerity that she had not foreseen this possibility. It was the first time in her life that she experienced a feeling akin to regret, and she was much surprised at it; but her new protégé had many other astonishments in reserve for her!

The next morning, bidden as he had been before to go to her at ten o'clock, he was likewise led into the boudoir, where he found the Princess standing, clad in Persian silk of sombre colors, wrapped up to her throat, wearing a haughty look and ready to address him the sharpest lecture about the impropriety of his letter. She expected to see a despondent man, mad with love, appear before her, who would cry her mercy from her cruelty, who would implore her to give him her hands to kiss, which would at last give her the rare and exquisite delight of feeling herself absolute mistress of the unfortunate creature, both of his body and soul. Her expectation was disappointed.

"How did you dare to write me that ridiculous letter?" said she as she saw him appear.

"And you," returned Démiane, "how have you dared to treat me like a stranger, after what has happened here?"

She trembled and looked him in the face with the movement of a viper caught in his nest. She met two eyes flaming with anger and which looked as though they did not fear her the least in the world.

These two looks met for an instant and Démiane's did not falter; it was not tenderness that he felt for

her, this woman's soul mattered little to him; what he wished from her, was what she had before given him, the double intoxication of love and of pride.

Démiane was so handsome in his threatening attitude, that the Princess had not the courage to maintain her severity towards him. She burst out laughing and sat down in an arm-chair. He seated himself in front of her.

"You have the worst taste possible, *mon cher*," said she to him, continuing to laugh. "People do not do such things!"

"What do they not do? To my mind, one has no right to say to a man: I love you! and then to leave him at the door, for three days, like a dog!"

"I would observe to you that you have been received here every evening——"

"In your drawing-room!" interrupted Démiane, shrugging his shoulders, "like your friends, like your Raben, whom I hate——"

"You do so much honor to that dear Count? And why? Because he is paying attention to *Mamselle Hélène*?"

Démiane, who was astonished, looked at the Princess with amazement.

"Do you know nothing about it? They don't tell you every thing, *mon cher*. Leave him alone then! What can that matter to you?"

"It matters nothing to me," he continued, regaining his calmness. "You receive me in your drawing-room like a stranger; it is here that I desire to be received."

"The king says 'we desire,'" said Cléopâtre, in French, with an ironical tone.

"Your French niceties," replied Démiane, "change nothing in the present case; I am a Russian, and speak to you in Russ. You are making sport of me, and I do not allow people to do so."

"Then, do not be ridiculous," said the Princess, smiling. "Is this all that you have to say to me?"

"This first!" grumbled Démiane, who felt himself growing weak at the sight of her irresistible smile.

"And then?"

"And then, that I love you, that you know it well, and that you amuse yourself in torturing me. I have asked myself twenty times, since the other day, if I had not dreamed."

She nestled herself in her arm-chair, folding her arms and half closing her eyes.

"That is right," said she, in the sweet and drowsy voice that made her so different from her usual self, "it is best always to believe that one has dreamed ——"

"Why?"

"Because one may go to sleep again, and then — the dream begins anew."

Démiane, who was half wild, caught her in his arms, and clasped her to him passionately; but she said nothing and continued to smile.

When she was alone again, the Princess walked two or three times round her boudoir, touching mechanically the things that met her hand, then she stopped before her writing-table and took up a delicately carved ivory paper-cutter which she bent like a supple whalebone

between her two fingers. This pastime seemed to distract her from her nervous irritation; but, suddenly, the ivory, which was too much strained, broke with a sharp noise and the two pieces flew in different directions.

“No,” she said to herself, almost aloud, without bestowing a thought upon the pretty, destroyed work of art; “if he puts himself on that footing, it will be insupportable. I will not have it.”

She rang, and they brought her breakfast to her.

CHAPTER XLIV.

INDEPENDENCE.

DÉMIANE, who became calmer in proportion as he grew more accustomed to the strangeness of his situation, began to look about him. Many things that had at first passed unperceived in the tumult of his thoughts, returned to him now, and provoked some serious reflections in him. A word uttered by Cléopâtre during their first interview in the boudoir, had at first astonished, then flattered him, and later, after a more deliberate examination, he had begun to doubt the Princess' perspicuity.

Hélène loved him, she said? Certainly it did not seem as though she did! For since the memorable evening at the villa Rédine, little Hélène on the contrary appeared at all times freer and more independent; she had not ceased being sweet and obliging, but in her behavior, as well as in her playing, she gave evidence of a more marked individuality. If Démiane had known why such a change had taken place, it would not have failed to have increased still more his antipathy to Raben; fortunately he was not aware of it.

When the diplomatist had made his visit to our friends' house, he had not found Démiane there, who, by the way, he knew was absent. But he had talked for a long time with the three other members of this odd association, who were Bohemian in their ways and

bourgeois in their instincts, and he was convinced of the perfect honesty of all of them. In Madame Mianof's presence, who on the occasion had had the courage to sit up straight on a chair for nearly half an hour, he had advised little Hélène to overcome her useless timidity, he had persuaded her that she possessed the making of a distinguished pianist in herself, and that she ought to play a solo at the proposed concert for the Caucasian wounded. Vainly did the young girl allege her inexperience, and even her inability. Raben had not passed twenty years in all the European courts not to know how to overcome such honorable scruples; he secured a promise about her little solo, and withdrew delighted. He felt himself on the road to a good work, or at least, what he was pleased to consider as such, and this employment, which was different from those which until now had won him decorations from every known legation, gave rise to something very sweet and new in his mind.

If Démiane had had no knowledge of this conversation, it was because during the week that had followed it, they had scarcely seen him at home, and when he had deigned to show himself there, it was sometimes with a brow "loaded with care," as they say in tragedies, sometimes with an exuberance of gayety which left no room for anything except his own conversation, and sometimes with a dignity full of pride, which told his friends how much he was their superior. But when he had balanced his mind, he perceived that little Hélène remained much less with him than formerly, that she practised a great deal more on her piano, and

that between the three friends there reigned a sort of tacit understanding, which consisted in doing admirably without his presence, and in making him feel that it was not in the least necessary.

Victor had invented this way of proving to Démiane that he was in the wrong. But it proved nothing, because wrongs are felt and are not proven, but the young man, who was much piqued at seeing himself thus excluded from the family circle, endeavored to resume his former place in it, the one which the others had allowed him to take, in deference to his talent.

He found a little resistance that was as delicate and soft as one of those small silk cords with which the Grand Viziers have the honor of strangling themselves by the Sultan's orders. Their faces were always smiling, their words always affable, their actions full of affection and forethought, but all this said plainly to him: "You have friends elsewhere, go to your friends, my dear Démiane; your absence does not disturb us at all, oh! not at all; do not force yourself, through politeness, to give us any time which you might better employ."

Though he tried to prove that his time belonged to himself, that he had no friends elsewhere—the small silk cord remained stretched between him and the three others, who seemed, moreover, perfectly happy.

When they brought him the order for the programme for the concert, so that he might write thereon the names of the pieces he intended to play, he read on it with infinite surprise: "*Grande Polonaise* by Chopin, played by Mademoiselle H. Mianof."

"You!" said he to the young girl, who with her work in her hands was anxiously awaiting the words that would fall from his omnipotent lips.

She replied by a motion, as was her habit.

"You? You are not thinking of such a thing! To play a solo before all those people!"

"Do you think I am not capable of it?" she asked with a sort of coquetry, which, though new to her, had none the less charm.

"I think," he replied, a little displeased without knowing why, "that if you were not capable of it you would not expose yourself to a public *fiasco*. But you have always protested your repugnance to solos—I did not suppose that you had time to change your ideas."

"It does not take long to change many ideas!" returned Héléne vivaciously, and blushed immediately at her audacity.

Démiane looked at her with an increasing trouble in his mind. Had that little girl divined his feelings for the Princess, or why was she making allusion to a liking she had for him, and which she had overcome enough not to think of it any more? The thought that he might have been loved even by little Héléne, and that he was so no longer, was very disagreeable to him. He did not care at all for the little girl, be it understood; but if, after having loved him, she had allowed herself to take back her heart, it would be manifestly absurd! What had he done that his accompanist should think less of him? A most clear examination of conscience proved to him that he had done nothing to make any one in the world think less of him. His feelings for

Cléopâtre had absolutely nothing to do with those of his friends towards him, that was as plain as the day.

“What do you mean to say?” he asked at length. Concluding that this question was perhaps the only means of enlightening himself.

“*Mon Dieu!*” she replied, very much ashamed at having said so much, “people have ideas and change them, do they not? It is not a rare thing. It happens to every one, to yourself.”

“There is no question about me!” continued Démiane, with the gravity that he had imported from the villa Rédine; “my ideas have not changed, it is yours that have done so.”

So rigorous a procedure was well calculated to disconcert Hélène, so she made a desperate plunge which brought her suddenly face to face with a great question.

“Well, yes!” said she betraying herself without knowing it, “people sometimes have ideas that are — stupid! They perceive it, and then they do all they can to get them out of their heads, and ——”

“And they succeed?” asked Démiane approaching her.

A sudden interest had taken possession of him at the thought that this poor child might have conceived the heroic idea of struggling against the love with which he had inspired her. And here it was that little Hélène underwent a cruel combat! To lie seemed odious to her, and, moreover, impossible; to tell the truth was less odious, but equally impracticable; she tried twice to pronounce a yes which strangled her, and to stop a

no that was stifling her; at length she found without knowing it, a middle term.

"Yes," said she, boldly, while all her sweet and charming person, her changing blushes, and her eyes, which were asking pardon for the author of this falsehood, said *no* much louder.

"Ah!" said Démiane who was strangely moved, "you are brave, Hélène."

"Oh! no!" she replied, hastily turning away.

He remained silent for a moment; she was brave in all ways, since she used so much courage in defending herself. Poor little one! He ought to have thought about it! Of course it would be so! How could she resist Démiane's daily presence, Démiane who led away princesses. At the memory of how he was treated by his pretended conquest, he could not help having a heart-ache.

"That is the way I ought to be loved!" said he to himself. "What a misfortune that all the devotion should be here, and all the rest *down there!*"

"Hélène," continued he after an instant, "you are a good creature; I have a great deal of friendship for you. I did not know you. Now I shall be more just to you."

She replied a "thank you" that was very feeble and very sweet.

"You are right," Démiane went on, carried away by his generosity; "you are perfectly right to wish to play alone; you must make yourself a name. You must give a concert when you return to Moscow, and I will play for you as you have played for me."

With the usual greatness of his nature, he held out

his hand to Hélène. He did not know exactly what he expected, but he would not have been surprised to have seen it bathed with tears of gratitude. What was his astonishment to feel it very strongly shaken by little Hélène, who gave him a very hearty grasp, while saying to him in a very joyful tone :

“Thank you, Démiane, Démiane!” and shaking hands in the English fashion !

Nothing but Démiane ! He was so stunned by it that he took his violin and practised scales for at least an hour before he could recover his spirits.

CHAPTER XLV.

ANDRÉ ASKS FOR HELP.

“MY dear Démiane:—I am not writing to you, but to your brother; for, in your answer, you forgot one thing: which was to send me your future address. Victor is a practical man, fortunately. Do me the pleasure of telling me how I could have continued the correspondence, if he had not had the bright idea of writing to me a second time, as soon as you reached Piatigorsk!

“But above everything, permit me to congratulate you on the wonderful chance which has led you into those fortunate regions, at the feet of the most beautiful mountains in the world, and at the feet of the most beautiful Princess in the universe—

“There, calm yourself! I will not say anything more about it. You have with regard to that great and good lady, once before desired to eat me up: the lesson will be profitable to me. Let us talk rather of myself. Myself, which is an inexhaustible and charming theme.

“Imagine, my friend Victor,—it is Victor alone whom I am addressing—imagine, that my situation has not changed an iota since my last letter. Behold me, turned forever into a china dog, for there is no reason for hoping this will end, on the contrary! Mademoiselle Mouza, the muse, gives proof of a firmness of character that is truly admirable. Her absolute

muteness ends by inspiring me with respect and I shall never have the courage to be the first to break so worthy a silence. Savages are decidedly very superior to us civilized people, who think ourselves great philosophers because we say over every day from morning until night a long rosary of sentences that are as empty as glass beads. But, O! Victor, what a service you have rendered me! Without you, I should have died of an internal hemorrhage of words —

“During the last two weeks, I have had time to go over my domain. How vast it is! I wore myself out trying to do so on foot. And how beautiful it is too! I love it as though I had passed a long previous life upon it. My modest house is large enough for me to be able to shelter you all in it, including the ladies who accompany you and who, perhaps, will do me the great honor of coming here with you. It is built of red brick; the white plaster covering which formerly spoiled it, has fallen off in places, and that which remains on it has taken the most superb grey tints. In all the rooms of the first story the beaten earthen flooring is as hard as stone, and Mouza spreads hay over it every morning, that is to say bunches of the aromatic herbs of the steppe, whose delicious odor sometimes intoxicates me. Behind the house is a garden full of cherry trees where the nightingales sing; all around there is a curtain of trees, which is a precious luxury in this country, and around these trees the steppe, the great steppe, which extends on all sides as far as the horizon, like a round table which has not yet been laid, this, in three words, is the new universe where I am living happily, where I

shall die perhaps, if Mouza does not drive me away from it by her stillness.

“I forgot to tell you that in a nook, three or four *verstes* from my domain, a little village of small white houses is hidden. This village has inhabitants; these inhabitants have children, and very surly dogs. War is a phenomenon that is as natural as the rain; it arises from small things, it would arise from nothing at all, rather than not be. The only way to destroy it would be not to have any neighbors. Greece went to war against the Trojans about a woman; and I have had a quarrel to settle with the village children about a toad. This is how it was:

“The other day, or rather the other evening, to speak more properly, for the sun had just set, I had gone to take my siesta in the open air, far from the house, in order to rest my ears from little Mouza’s pitiless silence. You could not imagine unless you had heard it, what a noise the insects of the steppe make, when the sun is setting, and when one is stretched out on the grass. It is a deafening uproar. You would say that the trumpets of Jericho had all begun to sound at once. Ah! our Gogol is a great poet; he has heard and understood the music of the steppe! His *Tarass Boulba* could only be the work of a Little-Russian.

“But he does not love toads enough. Do you know, my friends, a more melodious song than the toad’s song? It has only one note, but an exquisite note, that I was incapable of appreciating during my law studies, and which the art of musical-instrument making has alone rendered me worthy of understanding. This melancholy note produces the effect upon me of

belonging to a minor scale; why? I do not know at all. Démiane can explain it to me, perhaps. It has a pure tone, not silvery, but crystalline, like the sound of a pick-axe on a block of granite when they are cutting it, or like certain light, harmonious notes drawn from the large string of a violin. When the voice of the toad arises in the calm evening air, I have only to close my eyes to feel myself transported into the kingdom of Queen Mab, where one does not find surly dogs, nor boisterous children, nor little dumb girls.

“Well, then, the other evening, I had finished my siesta and was rubbing my eyes, when I heard, not far from me, something like the clucking of a flock of little turkeys. The barking of a large dog made the bass in this harmonious concert. I turned my head and I saw Mouza standing out in a grey outline against the bright sky, with her arm raised, and threatening with a stick three or four ragged urchins and a monstrous dog.

“I ran in great haste to know what it was all about, and I heard the following dialogue:

“‘You shall not touch it, do you hear!’

“‘Ah! are you mad?’ replied the largest boy.

“‘Mad or not, I tell you that you shall not touch it.’

“‘We *will* touch it!’

“‘Try and see whether you can!’ cried the little amazon.

“She was as pretty as a pink, with her frowning brows and her tumbled hair.

“‘But toads belong to everybody, the good Lord made them for that.’

“‘The good Lord made them for you to leave alone,

I do not want you to hurt them! And besides, that one is on my property.'

"She said 'my property' with an accent of conviction that made me tremble. At that moment I reached the scene of warfare, and I perceived behind this odd girl's heels, a toad of quite fine appearance, who must already have received some blow, for it was lying there motionless and stunned. Without waiting for any further explanation, I picked up a great clod of earth and threw it at the dog, who was barking decidedly too near. He received it in his muzzle and withdrew, howling. To finish my work, I seized Mouza's stick; seeing which, the boys fled, not without throwing me some Cossack oaths: a kind of oath that is not made of rose-water, I can assure you.

"Mouza looked at me fixedly, with a half-pleased, half-vexed air. She would, perhaps, have preferred to have come out of the scrape all alone. Without saying a word, she reached out her hand, looking at the stick in a way which seemed to say; 'Give it back to me, immediately.' I returned it to her mechanically. Meanwhile the toad had recovered its consciousness, and was disappearing in unsteady bounds. She made sure that it had no more need of help, and set off quickly towards the house.

"You imagine perhaps, that after such an episode peace must have been signed between us. Not the least in the world. Our breakfasts and our dinners are always just as silent as before. She has allowed me two or three times to pour her out something to drink; that is all. What a pity that this droll little girl should have taken in ill-part my arrival on 'her property?'

You know, my friends, that I have the bump of professorship: I taught Démiane philosophy, the art of making musical instruments to Victor; I would have taught Mouza all that an intelligent woman ought to know, beginning with what the school-master teaches little girls—But what would you have me do? She is too large! She looks like a little woman, and at times, a little Empress! I do not know how it is, but I feel like a small boy beside her!

“All this must end however. This situation cannot last forever. I have now reached the age when people marry; and how could I bring my wife into a house haunted by this odd imp? It is enough to make one break one’s head against the wall!

“Here is enough for to-day. If my letter seems long to you, remember that I have no one to speak to, and write to me very soon.

“Your friend,

ANDRÉ LADOF.

“P. S.—She has spoken to me! I had just cleaned my gun and was going out, when she stopped me on the threshold:—‘Where are you going?’—‘I am going shooting.’—‘To shoot what?’—‘Birds, *parbleu!*’—‘I do not wish the little birds to be killed.’—‘Ah! *par exemple!* that is a little too much!’ cried I.—‘Then,’ this astonishing girl answered me, ‘why did you prevent the children from killing the toad?’

“Finding nothing for an answer, I re-entered the house. I discharged my gun, and put it in a corner. I would like to know what she will forbid me next time? Hasten to my help with your ladies: perhaps they will succeed in taking her away.”

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE ROLES ARE CHANGED.

HELENE and Démiane were rehearsing a *concerto* in the large hall of the Bathing Establishment; they were alone, with all the doors closed, for fear of draughts, which twice already had torn the sheets of music from their desks and made them execute a fantastic race under the chairs. Hélène laughed over it, but Démiane did not much like to run about on his hands and knees. After all, he was right: a man who passes his time before Princesses' knees, may readily not wish to go down on his own before the empty chairs which were occupied yesterday, which will be occupied to-morrow again, by Madame *la Capitaine* or Madame *la Lieutenant*, in other words, by nothing at all!

The waiters, after having finished sweeping the upper gallery, pouring the while on the artists, floods of Caucasian dust, which is not cleaner than any other, had retired, knocking against the glass doors, with the usual carelessness of people who do not pay for the broken glass, and our friends were alone, all alone. Absorbed in their study, neither one nor the other paid any attention to it, nor did they bestow a thought on the garden which stretched before the front doors, with its rich clothing of August flowers, dahlias and chrysanthemums, the precursors of the autumnal days which

would not now be long in coming. Pages of music succeeded pages, and the two artists seemed to have forgotten that they were not made of steel, and that fatigue is an existing and real state. At length, they reached the final chords, and Démiane, putting down his violin on the piano, wiped his brow, saying: "Ugh!"

Little Hélène looked at him sideways, mockingly, then turned over her music-book and his own, and opened them at the first page to begin again; this duty accomplished, she allowed herself the relaxation of cracking the little benumbed joints of her red and slender hands.

"Don't you think it is very warm?" said Démiane, yawning with a sigh.

Hélène went to one of the doors and fastened it — so that it should not be tempted to shut — to a hook that was made for this purpose, and returned and sat on the piano-stool.

"Oh! pardon me," said the young man, who had become very polite from frequenting such distinguished society, "it is I who ought to have done —"

"And it was I who did it," Hélène calmly replied; "oh! it makes no difference, I am used to it."

He looked at her a little surprised: she had not accustomed him to remarks of that kind: he thought she was in a bad humor; but she was not. She smiled calmly at the garden, which she saw through the opened door, and executed some very delicate little trills with her right hand high up on the piano keys.

She had become remarkably pretty. Was it the Caucasian table land that suited her temperament, or

the pure air of the mountains which had given her that slight *embonpoint*? She was whiter and rosier, in spite of the olive tint of her complexion, and she seemed calm and happy as she had never been before. D  mi  ne could not know that the evening before, little H  l  ne and Madame Moutine had walked together for two hours under the great trees on the Boulevard, and that the young woman had taught the young girl a few of the secrets of life.

“After having tried strong pepper,” she said, “he will return to cream, because it is cream that nourishes one, and that man cannot always live on excitement.”

Besides, if he had heard this unusual kind of conversation, he would not have understood much of it, and would have thought it had reference to household recipes for making little cakes, and that probably Val  rien had latterly shown a decided taste for spices.

Since this conversation, H  l  ne felt that a sun was going to rise in her life ; she had passed the night without sleeping, and yet she had dressed herself at dawn with a cheerfulness that was not usual to her ; she had looked at her mother sleeping with a tender pity, but had said however, to herself, that her mother was very good and very indulgent, then she set herself to work as she generally did, mending her clothes, refreshing by a few new ruches some almost worn out dresses, and giving to all that her fingers touched that serious and modest look which belonged to H  l  ne.

As she went over her needlework, she had found in her basket a torn handkerchief, which had great need of a darn, and a pair of much damaged socks. As she

was about to begin mending them, she stopped, then with a queer smile, she carefully folded up the handkerchief, with the tear inside, and prepared the socks ready to be put on, and as ten o'clock struck she had carried these things into Démiane's room, which Victor was arranging, as he always did.

"Still some more of your work?" the good fellow said, with a reproachful look.

With the same smile, and a finger held to her lips, she opened the bureau, and placed the two things which she had brought on the top, so that they should be the first ones taken, then shutting the drawer and leaning her elbows on the bureau, she laughed heartily, and her laugh was musical and frank.

"What is it? a surprise?" said Victor.

"Yes, a surprise," Hélène replied, as she went away to laugh by herself.

But Victor was as curious as a cat: he had searched in the drawer, and an instant after he had joined the young girl.

"I do not understand—" said he.

"He will be furious, will he not?"

"I am afraid so."

"And I, hope so."

He looked at her more bewildered than ever.

"You have spoiled him, Hélène, he will be furious."

"Well, we will amuse ourselves a little."

"Do you wish to tease him?"

"I wish for him to consider me somebody. And you see, my good friend, if you do not make your services appreciated, no one is grateful to you for them."

“Oh! Hélène, I—”

“And,” said she delicately laying her hand on Victor’s arm, “I do not bring back torn pocket handkerchiefs to you.”

He remained thoughtful for a moment.

“Suppose we form a plot?” said he at length.

“Certainly! it is agreed.”

Their two heads approached each other and the result of the council was, that they were both merry for the rest of the day. It was this calm merriment that animated Hélène’s face when Démiane took it into his head to look at her, in the large hall of the Bathing Establishment.

“What is the matter with you?” said he to her with unusual kindness.

“I am waiting till we begin again,” she replied turning towards him her innocent, calm look.

With a motion of impatience, he took his violin and tuned it. Just as he was about to seize the bow, he stopped and asked his accompaniste:

“Do you think the *concerto* does not go well enough?”

“I think it does not go at all,” replied the young girl as she turned up the corners of her pages; “you do not come in in time, at the second repetition of the *staccato*.”

Really! Démiane laid down his violin. He did not come in in time! Hélène was criticising his playing! At the bottom of his heart, he knew very well he was not in time, and that was just what annoyed him. A similar circumstance had occurred more than once, and far from making any remarks to him about it, his faith-

ful accompaniste had hidden these slight defects; and thanks to her foresight he had even been able to rest himself a little, and to watch less closely over the execution of certain passages — Was she going to begin to tutor him now? He would like to see her!

But just as he was about to open his mouth, he closed it and took up his violin haughtily.

They began, and during three pages, everything went on perfectly; the most dangerous passage was executed by Démiane with rare perfection, and Héléne approved it with a motion of her head, with which, in spite of himself the young man was very much pleased, so pleased in fact, that he took advantage of his triumph to play a doubtful note an instant after.

“Aie!” said Héléne stopping.

“What is the matter?” Demiane muttered.

“Higher up, your *la*.”

Beyond question the *la* ought to have been higher; but what difference could that make to Héléne? Would not Démiane on the day of the concert know how to play without making mistakes? He said this to her with but little ceremony, and only obtained this in reply:

“When people allow themselves some carelessness in their practising, they are never sure of making it up before the public. If I practised like that, I would not do you much honor.”

“I believe it!” said Démiane nobly; “but that is not the same thing.”

“I do not know,” said Héléne, beginning to play again.

He had only just time to shoulder his instrument and to seize the melody in its flight.

He kept himself on his guard, caring little to catch again some other remark of the same kind, when a solo for the piano was reached which was full of expression, and which H  l  ne played admirably, so well indeed that our artist was charmed.

"How much progress you have made, little H  l  ne!" said he: "between your way of playing three months ago and that of to-day, there is a world of difference!"

She smiled with that enigmatical smile which made her so attractive, and he remained preoccupied while she finished her solo.

"It is your turn now," said she, when the time came.

The artist took up his part; but H  l  ne played her own too perfectly, so much so that D  miane, who was disconcerted, felt he was losing ground.

"You play too loud," said he, "you overpower my part with your piano."

"It is written *fortissimo*," replied she, pointing out the exact place with the end of her slender forefinger.

He took up his bow with an angry look, and played with the worst grace possible. Decidedly H  l  ne was becoming tiresome to pay such attention to the least trifles. When they had finished, he carefully arranged his music and his violin while she was doing the same; and after having accomplished this duty, he turned towards her with a brow like Jupiter's when a little remaining clemency restrains him from hurling forth his thunder.

"Can you by any chance, Mademoiselle H  l  ne,"

said he in his most stately tone, "do you pretend to give me a lesson?"

"I?" she replied, with a slight start. "Ah! Heaven is my witness, that I do not wish to give lessons to any one! But, my dear Démiane, is it giving you a lesson to remind you as I did a little while ago to have respect for the text?"

"Respect for the text?" murmured Démiane, "the text—may the devil take the— No, see here, Héléne, for some time past you have seemed to have no more friendship for me; you only tolerate me at the most, and—"

The young girl's face suddenly lost its calmness, and with a sad tone she replied:

"It is not I who have changed, you know it well."

"Then, you have still as much friendship for me as before!" said Démiane, whose good humor had suddenly returned.

"As much friendship—assuredly," Héléne answered with a certain reserve; "a friendship that is proportionate to your merits."

Démiane experienced the feelings of a man who receives a cold shower-bath without being prepared for it, and when he is all dressed too, which is the most disagreeable way of all others of taking that unpleasant thing.

"Have my merits diminished, according to your idea?" said he in a piqued tone.

"Oh! your merits are of many different kinds," Héléne returned with a sort of raillery; "I am not the judge of them, and then I know nothing about anything, but—"

She stopped speaking, rolled up her music and shut the piano.

“But what?” said Démiane, retaining her by holding her arm.

He was at once curious and irritated; he cared but little, in truth, what this young girl without fortune or position thought of him. However, it cost him something to feel a reserve in the opinion she might have about him.

“Do you wish to know?” said the little pianist, suddenly turning towards him and looking him full in the face, in spite of the honest blush that covered her own. “Well, I think that you are not careful enough of your dignity; that at the villa Rédine they treat you in the evening like a paid violinist, who is asked there to amuse the society; and that while you believe yourself a guest, like the others, you are only the musician! And that is not worthy of you, Démiane, and I tell you so.”

The artist would have liked to have informed this little insolent girl what price the Princess paid in the morning for the evening’s music, but he did not dare to do so; however, something in his look spoke for him.

“Yes, yes,” continued Hélène, “the—the friendship of this noble lady makes you blind with regard to the part that you play at her house! Has all her friendship for you ever made her take your arm to cross the Bathing Establishment garden or to enter the Concert Hall? The friendship which she has for you is a secret friendship—that she would blush to confess publicly—that she would deny to the death if any one spoke to her

about it, — and that kind of friendship, Démiane, adds nothing to the dignity of a man, on the contrary!”

She ended with a sort of stifled sigh, casting her saddened eyes down to the ground.

The young man, who had nearly burst forth with an angry expression ten times during this little speech, had no reply ready when she had finished. He recognized a bitter truth in these cruel words, whose sting he had felt many a time before. Utterly at a loss what to say, he suddenly had an inspiration from on high.

“You are jealous, Hélène,” he exclaimed, with the simplicity of a man who knows himself irresistible.

“Jealous? of the Princess Rêdine?” said Hélène, proudly raising her small head, that was like that of a Greek statue, and looking her friend-enemy in the eyes. “I do not do her that honor,” she added, with an accent of incomparable disdain.

“Hélène, you are forgetting yourself!” replied Démiane, who received the affront to the Princess as though addressed to himself.

“I think it is you who forget yourself, Démiane,” returned the young girl, in a calm tone, and without lowering her eyes. “What reason could Mademoiselle Mianof have for being jealous of the Princess Rédine? Between that lady and myself there is a gulf, a gulf which nothing can fill,” she continued with sovereign contempt — “and across which no bridge can be thrown! But you, Monsieur Markof, if you are anxious about your honor, look to what they do to you.”

“My honor! There is, thank God! nothing to do

with that in all this!" said the young man, with concentrated wrath.

"Do you think so? Well then, Monsieur Markof, if you think so, continue to live as you are doing; if you do not see that they treat you at the villa like a trained dog" — she continued, paying no attention to Démiane's irritated gesture — "it is your own affair; but for our part, we, who have a share in your dignity, will keep ourselves at a distance from your glory, we will try to live so far apart from it, that they cannot mix up our lives with yours, until the day, when weary of it, you will return to us, who are your true friends, and whom you now do not recognize as such."

"I think, Hélène, you have lost your mind!" said Démiane, who was exasperated.

"Do you wish to be sure of what I say to you? On the evening of the next concert, you will be in all your glory, will you not. Their Highnesses will have congratulated and complimented you. Try and say to the Princess that you are tired, and that you do not wish to play in her drawing-room, and you will see how she will treat you. Offer her your arm to return to her home, and you will see again. Be free, and talk to her as the other young men do, and you will see whether she does not put you in your place?"

"My place!"

"The one that in the eyes of the world, to which she belongs, you should occupy towards her. She does not love you, Démiane, she pretends to love you!"

"What do you know about it?" muttered the latter, who was irritated to torture by that voice which ex-

plained so clearly to him the cause of his dumb anger and secret rage.

"Because that is not the way that people love. No elevated feeling, no matter by what name it is designated, takes pleasure in leaving in an humiliating obscurity the friend that it has voluntarily chosen for itself."

He looked at her with a bad hidden thought.

"You talk knowingly about these things," said he, "who has taught you your knowledge?"

"Grief!" replied *Hélène*, passing proudly in front of him, "the grief of undeserved offenses, —and the sweetness of pardon," she added in a lower tone as she went out of the door into the garden.

He wanted to run after her, to have a quarrel with her, to call her names, and perhaps to shake her a little by the arm, without looking too much as though he were beating her; he wanted also to make her explain herself; he would have given a great many things and a great deal of money to have made her confess that she loved him; but he agreed with himself that the above-mentioned means were not the kind that are commonly employed to obtain an avowal of that sort, and, vexed and furious, he returned to his home.

The first pocket-handkerchief that fell under his hands was the one which *Hélène* had carried back to him that same morning. He took advantage of this happy circumstance to quarrel frightfully with Victor, who listened to him with a placid air while stuffing Turkish tobacco into cigarette moulds, and who answered not a word.

CHAPTER XLVII.

HÉLÈNE'S BOUQUET.

DURING the following two weeks, Démiane nursed his anger in every way. Twice the Princess had sent him word not to go to her in the morning at ten o'clock, and the third time it was he who gave himself the royal pleasure of informing her that he should not go. This last trait of character seemed to him worthy of Plutarch, and to put a little balm on his aching pride, he sat down in a corner and gloriously wove for himself a small crown of laurel. Myrtles did not seem to him to be in season,—and for roses, he began to feel but a moderate esteem since he had seen that the Princess wore or did not wear them, according to her caprice—whether they had seen each other on the morning of the day or not. Once he begged her to wear one of these flowers in her dress in the evening in memory of their interviews, and Cléopâtre had laughed a great deal at this sentimental extravagance.

“Ah! *mon cher*,” this truly superior woman said, “do not be sentimental, I beg of you; nothing is more ridiculous, nor better calculated to displease me!”

“You always talk about displeasing you,” replied Démiane, “and you never dream of asking yourself if something may not displease me!”

“You?” said the Princess, haughtily; “have you a right to find anything displeasing in me?”

"In what way, Princess?" the sullen young man said.

Instead of replying, Cléopâtre had passed her delicate and soft hand over his eyes, and the quarrel was at once ended. But the Princess was very much annoyed with this private warfare. "Those plebeians have no knowledge of life," she said to herself; "they are terribly ill-bred, and no one will catch me with them again."

This was why she had made the interval between the interviews in the boudoir longer and longer. But if Démiane were to dare to cease to come to her she would have to regain her empire over him, even were the power thus regained by bravado to last but one day.

On the morning of the day fixed for the "musical solemnity for the benefit of the Caucasian wounded," Cléopâtre on waking, said to herself that the occasion would be a favorable one for recalling this young Markof—who was decidedly too independent—to the true principles of good breeding, and she begged him to go to her.

When he received this communication, Démiane was busy about his afternoon's toilette—the Concert was to take place at two o'clock—and he was selecting, not without some trouble, a cravat from among quite a fine collection of little pieces of tumbled cambric. Hélène, who was in the next room ironing with a great deal of care some small pieces of lace, said nothing. Just as the messenger entered, she spoke to Victor, saying:

"Bring me your two cravats, I will iron them a little."

Victor hurriedly seized them both and presented them to this modest benefactress. A look exchanged between them, told them of their mutual anxiety; without knowing why, they dreaded this messenger, who seemed to forbode no good. Démiane read the letter, and looked at his watch, then hesitated for an instant, and after having cast a furtive glance into the next room, where his friends, who were motionless, were awaiting his decision, said :

“ Beg the Princess to excuse me. I must be in the Concert Hall in two hours, I cannot comply with her — ” He sought for the word, and then with some emphasis, concluded : “ her commands.”

The careless messenger withdrew, and Démiane, carrying his head higher than usual, went to join the two young people.

“ Will you say again, Héléne, that I am a man without dignity ? ” said he with a grand and self-satisfied air.

She looked at him furtively, and smiled, made a motion with her head which was with her a sign of satisfaction, and then to palliate what there might be too flattering in this approbation, she calmly replied :

“ One swallow does not make a summer.”

“ What must you have then ? ” said the artist.

“ A whole flock of swallows ! ” answered Héléne with her mysterious smile.

“ I am very stupid,” thought Démiane within himself, “ to bother myself about what she thinks ! ”

Poor Démiane was one of those who cannot do without the approbation of others ; that was his weakness,

but that also was the hope of those who loved him, for this desire for approbation would bring him back to them some day or other. Victor who had a naturally compassionate soul, went to join his brother to have a little conversation with him in order to reward him for his fine conduct. This was what between H  l  ne and himself they called "temporarily raising the quarantine."

The hall was full. Raben was conspicuous in the first row of chairs, with the newest of all his eye-glasses; the concert began; several artists of the orchestra of the Bathing Establishment brought the tribute of their talent to the Caucasian wounded; H  l  ne played the *Grande Polonaise* and was recalled twice amid the most extraordinary enthusiasm. She was so pretty that she seemed to radiate light around her. D  miane presented himself, bowed to the public, was applauded, bowed again and was re-applauded, and then bowed once more, shouldered his violin and looked around the hall. The Princess was not present at the concert.

"Yes, my handsome friend, so it is," Raben seemed to say to him who was looking at him with curious eyes: "you wished it, war is declared!"

D  miane possessed when it was necessary, an heroic soul: he made a sign to H  l  ne and they played the *concerto* as they had never played anything in their lives before.

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Raben half rising to applaud. Nearly all the hall followed his example; their Highnesses bestowed their compliments on the two artists with the most gracious smile, and three bouquets, which had

been ordered after the *Polonaise*, successively reached Hélène, who did not know what to do with them and would have much preferred not to have received anything than to have been thus complimented at Démiane's expense.

When they had retired into the artist's drawing-room, our friend, who was a little bewildered with so many diverse emotions, wiped his brow with a handkerchief, which that day was not a torn one, and turned towards Hélène to cover his embarrassment. The Princess' absence was, in truth, a declaration of war; but he had provoked it, and now he asked himself if Cléopâtre's love, that was so strange, so intoxicating, so little like any of which he had ever dreamed, was not going to escape him. This idea so filled his heart, that in lieu of something better, he was just perhaps, going to ask little Hélène what she thought of this extraordinary absence, when the latter gently laid her pretty little hand on our hero's arm, who mechanically cast his eyes on what she was holding in her other hand, then raised them again to his friend's eyes, for it is always in the eyes that one seeks for the explanation of a mystery; it was one of the bouquets which she had just received, that she held.

"Do you remember," said Hélène with a voice whose exquisite sweetness made one think of certain perfumes of oriental flowers, that are as delicate and penetrating as a breath of spring; "do you remember, Démiane, that you sent me my first bouquet?"

He suddenly recalled the great empty drawing-room, the grand piano, the fragrant bouquet in its vase and

the beginning of this strange friendship which had all at once, given him a sort of family relation.

"Yes," said he with a joyous tone. That time was far, very far away, and still hardly more than a few months really separated him from it; but his present existence seemed to him as though his temples were bound in an iron band when he compared it to that happy time.

"One cannot give flowers to men," continued H  l  ne, with a smile full of feeling that played about the corners of her mouth, perhaps to check the tears that were ready to rise in her heart; "I cannot offer you these bouquets; but they are yours D  miane, wholly yours; take a little sprig of green, some little thing, as an emblem of all the rest, which belongs to you."

She did not think it either sentimental or ridiculous, this little H  l  ne! to give him a souvenir of this day, D  miane extended his hand towards the bouquet, broke off a sprig of myrtle and smelt of it, and put it in his side pocket, and felt no more need of answering his young friend than the latter felt of saying anything further to him.

They stood thus, one in front of the other, both looking at the flowers that said so many and such different things to them; then their looks met, and they exchanged a smile that was as furtive and as full of feeling as a kiss. She turned away her eyes, but D  miane continued looking at her. The sight of this good and pure young girl did him wonderful good; it seemed to plunge his soul into a Lethean bath, in associating in his mind the memories of Jaroslav and those of the present time.

"I should be very sad without her," said he to himself suddenly ; "in the fever which I have caught here she has been the spring of pure water that has refreshed me. I thank you H  l  ne," said he, simply, thus terminating his thought aloud. And without knowing why, moved by a desire to express his gratitude better, he raised the little pianiste's cool hand to his lips, kissed it respectfully, and then pressed it to his moist eyes.

She looked at him surprised ; then an indescribable joy transfigured her face ; and she pressed her bouquet close to her breast and left the artist's drawing-room.

An instant later Raben entered and went straight towards D  miane.

"The Princess is a little indisposed," said he with that ease of manner which the young artist envied so much ; she commissioned me to beg you to come this evening and play some music with Mademoiselle H  l  ne. Where is Mademoiselle H  l  ne ? I thought I saw her here an instant ago."

"Mademoiselle Mianof has returned home without doubt," said D  miane in a grave tone ; "I do not know, monsieur, whether we can go this evening."

"Try to do so, my friend, do your best ; you have refused several times to go to the Princess, she told me so."

"She told you so ?" repeated D  miane who was infinitely surprised.

"She told me so ! what is there astonishing in that ?" said Raben with marvellous *sang-froid*. "You would not like to quarrel with her ; she has a great esteem for your talent ; she has even used the word genius in

speaking of you. Come, I beg of you, in her name and my own, if my voice can have any influence with you."

"Very well, monsieur, we will go," replied Démiane, affecting the same coolness as Raben, while this event filled him with a mad joy. The Princess begged him to go to her after his morning's refusal; she, therefore, confessed herself conquered! With the moderation usual to his age, he determined to abuse the superiority she had accorded him, and on returning to his home, he told Hélène of this invitation.

"As you please, my friend," she replied; and they exchanged only a few insignificant remarks until the evening.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

INSULT AND SEPARATION.

THE drawing-room was more brilliantly lighted than usual, the servants less respectful, and the service more noisy; through the open doors and windows blew a slight breeze, making the leaves and flowers, which were placed in large vases, tremble, and which gave them a restless look that was in harmony with all the rest. The Prince, who had come into the drawing-room immediately after dinner, wore a very animated expression; during the repast he had spoken several times, thus provoking the curiosity of his guests and the anxiety of his wife, who thought him astonishingly excited, and hardly was he installed in his customary place, than he had imperiously asked for two very different things, but which comprised all happiness for him: music and ices.

Cléopâtre had given orders to serve him the latter with moderation, and had promised him that he would not have to wait long for the pleasure of hearing the other. For she had, in truth, invited for that evening not only Démiane, but most of the artists who had taken part in the concert. This was the mortification which she had planned to punish the young man for his presumption, and “to put him back in his place.”

Monsieur and Madame Moutine, who had been invited several times, had limited themselves until then to short afternoon visits; but they also felt that things

were coming to a crisis without knowing why. The kind of nervous thrill which runs through all the members of one society when some moral storm is preparing, had taken possession of them as well as of the others, and it was the physician who had made his wife decide to accompany him, "to keep little Hélène company."

Cléopâtre had never been as beautiful as she was that evening. Raben, who had dined at the villa, could not help remarking the brilliancy of her eyes, and the changing color in her cheeks, which gave her a more excited air than usual; from time to time a slight tremor of anger or of impatience passed over her, and made the pendants that hung on a curious bracelet which she often wore, tremble. Her white silk dress, that was made of a lustreless and heavy material that fell in thick folds, moulded her superb form in the Oriental fashion, and was only caught up very low down by a winding scarf. This new way of dressing herself, which no one had dared to adopt until then, won cries of admiration for her from nearly all the men, and some half-flattering, half-alarmed remarks from the few women who composed her society, not one of whom would have dared to express the least disapproval of it.

Raben alone, who had not given up the idea of marrying her when the Prince's death would leave her free, allowed himself, as her eventual husband, to express some words of criticism.

"You are too beautiful," he said to her in a low voice, when she appeared in the doorway, throwing out her wonderful profile against the dark material of the curtains.

She looked at him with a proud smile, in which a sort of interrogation was mingled.

"You are too beautiful for every one to see," he continued; "a man who loved you would prefer that you would be as handsome as this for himself alone."

"Beauty is power, Raben; I think I have already told you so," she answered, passing in front of him.

Wearing only white, with gold ornaments, a massive gold comb in her hair, and on her arms bracelets of pure gold, which were almost rude in their form, Cléopâtre could successfully challenge any other wonder in dress; for no one saw anything else save herself in her drawing-room, which was, however, so rich, since she entirely filled it with the incomparable radiance of her beauty.

The guests began to arrive; Valérien and his wife had the honor of an especially gracious reception; after having installed Groucha in a comfortable and well-placed arm-chair, the young physician had gone and sat down beside the Prince, whom he had examined for rather a long time. The old man had talked to him with the new loquacity which seemed strange to those who knew him, and on leaving him, Valérien had forbidden his servant to give him any more sweets that evening. "Especially no ices," he said: and then he went to mingle with the other guests. Valérien knew how to make himself a particular place, wherever he went—the place of a man whom nothing can injure, who has need of no one, and of whom every one may have need.

The invited artists had come; they had already

played a little music, but Démiane did not appear. The Princess, beckoning to Raben, made him approach her.

“Did you tell him?” said she, with a nervous trembling in her lips which grew pale, in spite of the effort of her will to prevent it.

“Yes, Princess; do I not do all that you tell me?”

“Did he understand?”

“He certainly understood, madame, at least, as much as you desired he should understand, — perhaps even more.”

She looked at Raben with a sort of fierceness that well suited her thin face and her strange attire.

“What do you mean?” said she, fixing her cruel eyes on those of the diplomatist.

“Nothing that you are not capable of having thought, Princess.”

She was going to reply, when a movement at the door made her turn her head away. She was wild with impatience, and yet she made this motion with a noble dignity which Raben admired with all his heart. She was made to wear a crown, and under that crown to receive all homage as well as all affronts, still preserving her smile of haughty kindness.

“What an ambassadress you would make!” said he to her, in a whisper.

She had heard him, and he divined it from a slight movement of her arm; but she said nothing, and continued looking at the door.

Démiane had just entered, looking extremely pale in his white cravat, but with his head carried high and with a confident look; the glance of these two persons,

who had every reason for adoring each other, met with absolute indifference, which, under the existing circumstances, was the most outrageous of challenges.

"Good-evening, Monsieur Markof," said the Princess in her clear voice, without making a movement; "we are waiting for you. Well! and Mademoiselle Hélène?"

"Mademoiselle Mianof must have come here some moments ago, Madame," replied Démiane, bowing before her with respect.

It was true. Little Hélène had entered quietly with some other ladies, and without making any noise had slipped in near to Madame Moutine.

The eyes of the guests sought the young girl, and this movement of curiosity brought a slight rosy tint to her cheeks. She rose and went straight to the Princess, irreproachable in her modesty, and worthy of all respect. She was dressed in pale blue, that was as pale and as sweet as the forget-me-nots which she wore in her hair and carried in her hand. These humble brook-flowers, that were grouped in her superb hair in thick masses, were made for her, as she was made to do them honor.

"You did not come together!" said the Princess, with that smile that excused the greatest impertinences as they fell from her mouth, for no one ever knew whether she was in jest or not. "I thought you scarcely ever left each other."

"Mademoiselle Mianof has made herself an independent place to-day in the esteem of artists and of the public," replied Démiane valiantly, who was piqued, one could not say why, at Cléopâtre's remark.

"They told me so just now," the latter answered

carelessly, letting the challenge fall; "I congratulate you, Mademoiselle. I was not able to hear you, I regret it."

Hélène bowed and answered nothing, to the great scandal of the ladies, who looked at each other. That little musician should have replied by placing herself at the service of the lady of the house. Was it possible to have so little manners!

"Some music!" said the Prince in a hoarse and hesitating voice, which was not at all natural to him, who spoke seldom but with a great deal of distinctness.

These words removed the difficulty of the situation.

"Do you hear, Mademoiselle?" said the Princess, with the same smile.

Hélène laid down her bouquet on the piano, took off her gloves and began to play.

A great silence fell upon the large room, so great that they distinctly heard a light breeze pass over the leaves in the garden; the flame of the candles trembled above their crystal supports, then calm was re-established, and some sounds that were so delicate, so soft that they seemed to float in the very atmosphere, arose in the drawing-room. After an instant's attention, every one understood that he was going to enjoy one of those delights in pure Art which may be experienced two or three times in an existence, and which make an era in life.

Démiane had retired a little, and as he stood leaning against the door of an adjoining drawing-room, he listened to what Hélène was playing, and thought he heard it for the first time. By degrees he let himself

be cradled by his revery, he forgot Cléopâtre and the struggle begun, closed his eyes and thought that the young girl, playing for him alone, was relating a story to him which it seemed to him he already vaguely knew.

It was the story of a resigned, but still young and ardent heart, who, in the obscurity of a poor and joyless life, was ignorant of everything, save Art and the enjoyments it procures; to this humble heart, that was contented with little, each day was pleasant, provided it brought no sorrow with it, and the sighs which it sometimes let escape were not those of envy or regret, but those of a melancholy which had no bitterness. Suddenly, with a few flowers, the sunshine had entered into this soul, but an April sunshine, which was often veiled by clouds, so often, that at times it would have preferred to have been ignorant of the sun and the trouble which its rays had brought forth. Then had come austere work which consoles for everything, that was but little rewarded but yet rich in solemn sweetness,—and a new struggle, no longer with poverty, but with the enemy, the enemy of happiness, the one that wished to banish the sunshine from this existence; oh! then, the wounded heart had found weapons, noble weapons, of the kind which one bears openly, and behold now, powerful and as proud as the eagle that beats his wings above the summits of the Caucasus, the victorious soul hovered in the ether and sang its triumph! Yes, its triumph, Démiane; but to place in your loved hands the palms of its victory, or rather the sprig of myrtle which, still green and perfumed, embalmed your

note-book in the pocket of your dress-coat, that sprig of myrtle, which was the symbol of little Hélène's whole life, which had been formerly disdained, and which to-day unveiled itself as a greater artist and a greater soul than yourself.

He opened his eyes, and a thunder of applause, for which the Princess, with perfect good taste, had given the signal, awakened him from his dream. With twenty other people he approached the piano; but Hélène was too much surrounded to be able to perceive him; in an absent way, he took up the bouquet of forget-me-nots, and plunged his burning face into it to breathe its moist freshness. The rustle of heavy silk made him turn round brusquely, and he saw the Princess slowly enter the long line of drawing-rooms that led to her boudoir. He rushed after her at once, and joined her in a moment. She did not seem to have heard the noise of his footsteps; he called to her softly.

"Princess!" said he.

She turned round.

"What do you want?" she said, in her indifferent tone.

They were alone; the crowd was stifling in the large drawing-room; some old generals, who were desperate players, of the kind that would play on their death-beds, were playing some games of *préférence* in an adjoining drawing-room, and the rest of the villa was deserted. The Princess threw a glance down the long line of lighted rooms, and assured herself that no one could hear them.

"Well, what do you want?" she repeated, looking Démiane this time in the face.

"You cannot receive me when I ask you to do so," said the latter, impelled by an increasing anger; "you do not love me any more."

"I might have received you this morning," returned the Princess, calmly. "It was you who refused, I return your assertion to you."

"You do not love me any more," repeated Démiane, who was too much irritated to allow himself to be diverted from his sole thought; "you are tired of me."

"Those are things which are not said, monsieur, between well-bred people," replied Cléopâtre, with an accent of provoking disdain.

"But between well-bred people they can be thought, can they not? provided they do not utter them? With you appearances save everything."

"Ah! my dear Monsieur Markof, do not have a scene with me, I beg of you! Nothing is more tiresome and more useless."

"Then," said Démiane, stretching forward his arm violently, to seize her by the hand, "you do not love me any more?"

"And who told you that I have ever loved you?" returned Cléopâtre, drawing back a little, but looking him full in the face.

Démiane drew back in his turn; this blow was so unexpected that it found him defenceless. A sort of horror entered into his soul, and he did not wish to believe the evidence of his own senses.

"You have not loved me," he repeated, slowly. "But if you did not love me ——"

Cléopâtre shrugged her shoulders and wished to pass him; Démiane barred the passage to her.

“If you have not loved me,” said he, brutally, “why have you received me there?”

He pointed to the door of the boudoir, which was at a little distance. The Princess shrugged her shoulders again, and, instead of pursuing her way, she returned, without hastening, towards the drawing-room.

“If you have not loved me, why am I here? why—”

“Why?” returned Cléopâtre, measuring him with superb contempt, “to play the violin, my dear Monsieur Markof.”

Struck to the heart, Démiane stood motionless and stunned, mechanically listening to the noise which the long silk train made as it swept slowly away with a regular movement. When the Princess reached the large drawing-room and he had seen her disappear among the guests, he came back to himself and rushed after her. She was already seated in an arm-chair and was talking with her usual grace. In the door of the card-room, he met Raben who put his hand on his arm:

“No scandal,” said the diplomatist to him, in a very low but firm tone; he had divined the preceding scene from the little he had been able to observe from a distance. “A scandal would be the ruin of you.”

“I am not afraid of anything!” said Démiane proudly.

“Bah! it is a great deal better to live in peace, happy and honored—”

Démiane cast down his head; the word “live” made him shudder. He followed Raben into the drawing-room, and found himself near Hélène who for a moment had been looking for him, with an anxiety which she

scarcely knew how to dissimulate. He saw her, but vaguely, his eyes that were blinded by a desire for vengeance, only perceived the shimmer of the Princess' heavy white silk dress, with its clinging folds, as she sat in her arm-chair.

"Another ice!" said the Prince very loudly, who had taken advantage of his wife's disappearance to stop a waiter passing before him and to have himself helped abundantly by a servant who was ignorant of the physician's orders.

Cléopâtre rose hastily, addressed a few words of reproach, consolation and tenderness to her husband, and after having calmed him, she returned to her guests. The animation of the soirée, which had been so great, seemed to languish. On meeting Démiane's eyes that were steadily fixed on her with a mixture of stupor and indignation, an idea that was worthy of her struck her mind.

"It is your turn now, Monsieur Markof," said she, "a little music, if you please."

Her voice which was as clear as a clarion made the Prince tremble, and he sat motionless, looking at her with his mouth half-open. All eyes were turned towards the young violinist.

"Will your Highness excuse me," replied Démiane in a voice that was equally clear and aggressive. "I am fatigued from the morning's concert."

"Do you refuse me?" said Cléopâtre, slightly retreating.

He bowed respectfully; all his calmness had returned to him; and he now felt master of himself, for he had taken his revenge.

"It is not a refusal, your Highness, it is a prayer."

"I did not know that you were so easily discouraged," returned the Princess wickedly; "it is since Mademoiselle Hélène's great success that you refuse to let yourself be heard!"

The entire company trembled. Démiane's eyes shot forth a gleam; then suddenly joy overspread his face; he seized Hélène's hand, who, wounded to her heart, was looking at him with anguish.

"I could not be jealous," said he, "of Mademoiselle Mianof's talent, for in a short time she is going to become my wife."

"Bravo!" said Raben advancing towards him to shake his hand. His example was followed by a great many good people who did not suspect the least in the world, the heroism of which their musical-leader had just given proof.

Cléopâtre had almost imperceptibly drawn back again, and her hand rested on the back of her husband's arm-chair. For the first time in her life she was conquered, and the shock staggered her.

"He—he is going to marry her?" stammered the Prince pulling her by the dress.

"Yes, my dear, yes, he is going to marry her," replied Cléopâtre with instinctive solicitude.

"Present him—present him—my congratulations—" continued the old man persistently.

Slowly Cléopâtre approached the group which surrounded the young people, and which opened before her.

"I offer you my congratulations," said she in her

ringing voice, "and the Prince begs me to bear his congratulations to you. But one sees plainly that you are an artist, Monsieur Markof, for you are fond of theatrical surprises—nothing had made us foresee this happy ending."

The Princess' clear and disdainful laugh rang through the apartment, but without finding an echo.

"It is not so extraordinary," said Raben, thus preventing an answer which would, perhaps, have been sharper from Démiane's side; "such a charming couple—"

"Oh! Count, you are romantic," said Cléopâtre with indescribable contempt.

At this moment Valérien Moutine approached the Princess, while his wife was taking Hélène aside.

"Dismiss your guests, Madame," said the physician in a low voice, "the Prince is not well, I fear he is going to have an attack."

Cléopâtre turned eagerly to her husband. For him alone she could depart from her apparent calm. Let the world crumble, it matters little provided her fetish was spared!—The Prince, who continued motionless and stunned, looked at her, and his expressionless eyes seemed to grow dim. She laid her hands which trembled, this time, on her husband's cold hand, and addressed the physician a mute and despairing question.

He answered with a sign; the servants immediately rolled the arm-chair with the invalid into the private apartments, and no one perceived his condition.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the Princess, when the object of her solicitude was sheltered from curious eyes,

"the Prince is slightly indisposed, you will kindly excuse me if I do not keep you company any longer."

A tumult of questions interrupted her.

"Ah! nothing serious," replied she smiling; "a trifle, but my duty—"

A thousand regrets, a thousand praises, smothered the remainder of her sentence, and five minutes later the hinges of the iron gateway closed behind the last guest.

Cléopâtre, without taking the trouble to change her toilette, joined the physician and his invalid. Already the most powerful remedies fought against the evil, but without success. At the first ray of dawn, in her white silk dress, which was stained by the ice she had held all the night through on the dying man's head, the Princess Rédine knelt mechanically near her husband's bed-side; but it was a mere form of proper piety; for she did not think of praying, in the great and hopeless grief that filled her soul: her fetish was dead.

CHAPTER XLIX.

HÉLÈNE REFUSES.

HELENE and Démiane, escorted by Madame Moutine, had returned home without having exchanged a word. Each of them felt that a little repose and reflection were necessary in order to permit them to clearly face the new situation which the young artist had just created by a few words. On the threshold of their rooms, they exchanged a good-night, without even accompanying it with the habitual shaking of hands, and separated immediately.

Victor welcomed his brother with two or three common-place questions; he had not expected him so soon; how had the evening passed?

"Very well," replied Démiane with a preoccupied air; "the Prince had an attack and the Princess sent us away."

Victor looked at him twice, to assure himself that he was not jesting, but the young violinist did not look as though he wished to mystify him.

"In the name of Heaven, brother, what has happened?" exclaimed the good fellow, putting his hand on Démiane's shoulder, and trying to read his face.

"I am going to marry little Hélène," said the artist, with a gloomy air.

The poor hunchback withdrew his hand, looked at his brother with profound astonishment, and then suddenly a cry broke forth from his oppressed heart.

"You, Démiane? Ah! how glad I am, how glad I am!"

He was so glad that he went and threw himself on his bed, and hid his face in the pillow, sobbing.

"Is that the effect this news produces on you?" grumbled Démiane, who was less angry than surprised.

Victor rose, wiped his eyes, and held out his arms to his brother, saying to him:

"Excuse me, it is joy."

"A droll kind of joy!" said Démiane, yielding himself to his fraternal embrace, but without warmth.

The two brothers sat down face to face, and looked at each other for an instant.

"And *she*," hazarded Victor, "what does she say about it?"

"Whom do you mean by she?"

"Hélène, my sister Hélène?"

"Your sister Hélène says nothing at all."

"How nothing? Is she not happy?"

"I suppose so!" replied Démiane, with a slight smile of fatuity.

And he certainly believed that little Hélène was happy. However, he thought it strange that she had not said anything on their way home, but he himself had not opened his mouth.

"I do not understand," said Victor, with hesitation. "How does it happen that you do not know what she thinks?"

"We were not alone," replied Démiane, not without some repugnance, for the recital of what had taken place "down there" seemed to him difficult.

"Was it at the Princess', then?"

"Yes."

"Before everybody?"

"*Mon Dieu!* how many questions!" said Démiane, impatiently.

Under any other circumstances Victor, seeing him disinclined to answer, would have ceased interrogating him and would have waited till the next day, which could not have failed to have furnished him with the desired explanation; but Hélène's happiness was too dear to his heart, and he continued:

"Does the Princess know it?" he asked, touching the sore point with a precision which made Démiane tremble.

"Yes."

"Then," continued Victor with increasing emotion, in which this time joy had its place, "you have quarreled with the Princess?"

"Yes," almost screamed Démiane, who was furious. "And now, do you know enough?"

"Ah! my brother, how glad I am!" exclaimed the good fellow, this time from the bottom of his heart and without any reservation.

He seized his brother in his arms with a joyous outburst, and suddenly raising his hand, he made the sign of the cross on his rebellious brow:

"In the name of our absent father, Démiane, I bless you in your new life," said he, solemnly.

The artist lowered his brow and remained bowed beneath his elder brother's hand. Their father's image came and stood between them, recalling the family fire-side and filial duty.

"Listen to me, Victor," said the young man in a calmer voice, "I am going to relate to you what occurred this evening, and you will tell me whether I have done right."

Having resolved to make this confession he did it honestly and faithfully, without taking from or adding anything to the truth, and when he had finished he waited in silence for what his elder brother should say to him.

"Hélène has not replied to your proposal?" said the latter in a doubtful tone.

"No! What need was there of replying?"

"Well, brother, I am not sure that she will accept it."

Démiane started up.

"And why?" he began —

His brother stopped him with a gesture pointing to the drawing-room door which alone separated their room from that of their friends.

"Because she may have understood that you were not going to marry her for herself."

Démiane's head drooped and he walked to and fro in evident agitation.

"May the devil take all women!" said he as he was getting ready to retire.

"Not all!" protested Victor with a half smile; "let him content himself by taking one only."

The next morning, Démiane, who had awakened early,—he had scarcely slept—left Victor who had also not enjoyed a very refreshing rest, still slumbering, and gently opening the drawing-room door, entered and

closed it after him and went to the window to breathe the morning air. His sleeplessness had left him hot and feverish; the cool breeze which tossed his hair on his forehead did him good and calmed him. As he stood with his hand resting on the window-sill, looking beyond the town at the tops of the mountains piling up one above the other towards the heavens, he heard a door open, and turned round brusquely, thinking it was his brother.

It was H  l  ne who, moved by the same need of solitude and coolness, had left the room where her mother was sleeping, and had come to breathe the morning air. She had shut the door before she perceived D  miane; deceived by the artist's lazy habits she thought she had found Victor instead of his brother. However, H  l  ne was valiant; she let go the handle of the door and took two steps forward. D  miane approached her. She saluted him with a nod of her head. He placed two chairs in the embrasure of the window; she took one of them and he remained standing in front of her, with his hands resting on the other. They both felt that this interview which they had not sought would decide their future existence.

"Victor said something to me last night which made me afraid," began D  miane with an unsteady voice; "he fears that you will not consent to marry me; however, yesterday, you did not say no, H  l  ne; his fear is ill-founded, is it not?"

She listened to him motionless; her little white peignoir did not tremble: with her hands clasped on her knees, and her head a little bent down, she seemed a statue of attention.

"Yesterday," she replied in a low voice, for she did not wish to wake those who were sleeping near, "I could not answer you; you had disposed of my future fate without my consent; I am not angry with you for doing so; it was a vengeance which you had under your hand, and you made use of it—it was very natural."

"Then, you consent?" said Démiane who was uncertain, and did not know whether he should rejoice or be sorry.

"No," said little Hélène softly, lowering her head.

Démiane bit his lips and let go the back of his chair; this mortified, and even caused him some grief.

"I understood very well that you should desire to make that lady think that I have consented," continued Hélène calmly. "So, during the time which we still have to spend here,—a few days, is it not?"

"We will leave to-morrow if you desire it," replied Démiane.

"Very well. Until then, you need not contradict the announcement which you gave yesterday of—of that marriage; but when we have left this place, we will each take back our liberty, and if later you should meet some one who should ask you why we have not acted upon it, you will reply that we have changed our minds."

"Then," said Démiane, who was overcome at the tranquil manner with which she arranged all this, "you refuse to marry me?"

"You do not love me!" replied Hélène gently, whose cheeks had grown a little pale while she was speaking, and who turned away her face.

He looked at her surprised. She loved him, and she refused him because he did not love her! What a proud soul was little Hélène's! He looked at her with new respect. For some time past this respect had been increasing, and he had not yet found where it would end. Then he felt hurt at this judgment passed upon him. How could she know that he did not love her?"

"But I do love you, Hélène!" he continued, imploringly.

She shook her head with that sweet sadness that gave her so much charm.

"Oh! no," she said, "you do not love me enough! you love to be loved, Démiane, and you yourself do not love."

He felt that she spoke the truth, but in these words he found a new hope.

"If you love me — a little — I love you more than you think. We could still be very happy."

She made a negative wave of the hand.

"You would be very happy," said she; "you would love me just enough to return home whenever people should cause you any grief elsewhere; you would be glad to find your things in order, your drawers arranged, some good music to divert you, a good accompaniment, not too good, however; you do not like people to accompany you too well, Démiane; and after you were rested, happy and comforted, you would return to the world to pay attention to some Princess. You would be very happy, Démiane, and I would be very unhappy."

The young man had blushed from shame at first and from anger afterwards; he controlled himself, however.

"How well you know life," said he with bitterness; "and how well, too, you know my character! But do you not fear that in occupying yourself so much about your own happiness you may become a perfect egotist?"

"Egotist?" she replied, smiling, "that is a word which we will share together if you choose. And do you not see what a singular union ours would be? We quarrel incessantly!"

"For some time past, it is true," replied Démiane; "formerly we used to agree."

"Because I always yielded," said little Hélène, sweetly.

"And why will you not yield now?"

She blushed; it was since she loved him that she had held out against him, since she hoped to see him one day worthy of the love she had given him so generously in advance.

"Because one only yields to children and weak people," said she. It is a proof of esteem to struggle with those who deceive themselves."

"Do I deceive myself?"

"You deceived yourself once, at least, when you thought that I would accept your name."

Démiane was conquered; it is always hard to be conquered, but especially so the first time.

"Then you finally refuse me?" said he, sad and humiliated.

She nodded in the affirmative.

"Forever?"

Here she felt herself grow weak; forever, that was very cruel! Suppose she should discourage him and

throw him into new perils? She blushed, and in spite of herself her eyes filled with tears. He took her hand with genuine tenderness. How much dearer she became to him in proportion as her refusal became plainer and more certain! At the thought that she might go away, that he might lose all the domestic joys of which she had ironically painted him the picture an instant before, he felt himself overcome with a regret which greatly resembled love.

"I do not know," said she, in a broken voice, "what may happen later."

He sat down beside her, keeping the young girl's small, cold and trembling hand in his. Since she refused him, they would separate, and he would lose the charm of her presence. Those calm and intelligent eyes, which so well divined his thoughts, had brought so much joy into his life. She wished to withdraw her hand, but he retained it; she turned away her head, but too late; for a tear had fallen on her dress, and Démiane had seen it.

"You are weeping, Hélène," said he to her, feeling a sweet warmth rise from his heart to his brain, and becoming bolder than he had thought himself capable of being with this young girl, who was formerly so indifferent to him;—you are weeping, because it pains you to part from me;—it is true, is it not? You do love me? Why do you wish to refuse the happiness that comes to you."

She withdrew her hand hastily from the young man's, and looked him in the face, trying no longer to conceal the tears that streamed down her cheeks.

“Yes, you are right,” said she, “what is the use of lying! and I do not know how to lie! Yes, I love you; I love you more than my life, more than my own happiness; and that is why I will not marry you! I do not wish to grow to hate you some day, to despise you, perhaps. I would despise you if you were to me the husband you offered me last night. A man who would have taken me from spite, from anger, in order to get out of a disagreeable affair, and who would despise me for having accepted him, knowing that he did not love me! If I accepted you to-day, Démiane, you would think that I had not been able to resist my love for you, that I considered the happiness of being your wife above my honor, my dignity, my whole future. No, I love you, and I will not marry you so long as you have not the same love for me as I have for you, a love which places the esteem for the person one loves above everything in this world.”

“Hélène!” exclaimed Démiane, overcome and seized with admiration for the character which thus revealed itself, “you shall be loved as you wish, I swear to you! Ah! I did not know you!”

“I know it,” said she, returning to the sweet melancholy which was familiar to her. She wiped her eyes with the loose sleeve of her peignoir and looked vacantly out of the window.

“But I know you now, and I will love you! Dear Hélène, one prayer only! Do not leave us! Let me continue to live near you, to learn from your example all that I am ignorant of about my duty; and later, perhaps — Yes, will you not?”

Hélène had struggled bravely; she was weary, and she yielded.

“Let us go to Moscow,” said she; there we will separate.”

“We will see, will we not? This is not your last word?”

“We will see,” said she.

He kissed her hand, which he had taken again, and if Cléopâtre could have seen him, she would have been wounded to her heart, for never had he shown her such profound respect nor such grave tenderness.

“We will not speak of this to any one?” said the young girl; “mamma knows nothing about it; she shall remain ignorant.”

“Not always, Hélène?” implored Démiane, as she passed before him.

She smiled faintly and returned to her room.

“She is an angel, Victor!” said our friend, returning to his brother, who was all dressed and awaiting with anxiety for the end of their interview. “Have you heard our conversation?”

“You spoke loud enough for me to do so! Yes, she is an angel, only you were not capable of knowing it.”

CHAPTER L.

ANDRÉ STRUGGLES AGAINST VARIOUS TROUBLES.

“MY dear friends, who have become my confidants, in spite of my aversion for confidences, come to my help! I am positively losing my mind, and if any one of you thinks he can infer from that that I have not a sound mind, let him put himself in my place! Moreover, if you had any compassion for a poor lonely man at bay, you would leave on the receipt of this letter, and you would see for yourselves whether there exists under Heaven a more bewildered man than myself.

“I believe I told you in my last letter that my domestic imp had opened her mouth for the sole purpose of forbidding my going shooting. Since then I have vainly alleged that as beasts were not birds, and as I would respect the little birds, I would like very much to shoot a hare—but beast or bird is all one to her, and the hares of the steppe are henceforth sure of a fabulous longevity, unless I set some snares for them. But what can you do with a hare unless you eat it? And can you imagine how my game would be welcomed at home? I tremble to think of it!

“My Kobold knows how to read and write; she has even some notions more strange than extensive on what is commonly called, I know not why, Sacred History;

for assuredly nothing is less sacred, and if — But this would make us digress from my subject; she is not sure whether the Jews and the Israelites were the same people; but on the other hand she knows the history of Joseph very well, and the other day, when I insinuated that hare was excellent dressed with sour cream, she told me I was as barbarous as the brothers of that patriarch.

“I think that in order to inspire me with more respect she had called all her knowledge to her aid, but it is nevertheless a fact that this rural muse has a little shade of what it is agreed to call the indispensable.

“Well, the other day, I had gone to wander round the steppe, exactly as the Parisians go to the Bois de Boulogne; for it is the *ne plus ultra* of my worldliness, but the sun broiled me so that I returned home unexpectedly. As I went into my room, which is the coolest in the house, what did I perceive? this extraordinary girl seated on the ground, almost bent double in the extreme interest with which she was reading in my *Lermontof* the sad story of Béla. When she saw me, she sprang to her feet like a child caught in the act of disobedience, and went towards the door, with my book, when she was seized with remorse. Although her ideas with regard to property are as strange as the rest of her education, she has well proved it, the poor child! still apparently my books are mine, more certainly mine than my house; for when she had reached the threshold, she turned round with the pretty gesture of a child who is obliged to do some tiresome act.

“‘May I take it with me?’ said she pointing to the volume.

“‘Certainly, Mademoiselle,’ I replied with a grand bow.

“She made me a very noble bow which probably signified thank you, and disappeared. I had the curiosity to follow her to see what she would do with her booty. She had taken refuge in an arbor of young vines at the extremity of the garden, and, seated on the ground,—that is her favorite position—she was devouring the novel; great tears were running down her face without her heeding them, and I saw her droop her head in her hands and sob. She had finished her chapter.

“She wept so bitterly that it seemed to me a case of conscience not to allow her to grieve in such a way. I approached with all possible precaution, and in my sweetest voice said to her:

“‘Don’t cry, Mouza, it did not really happen.’

“She looked at me through her dishevelled hair—My friends, if you only knew how pretty she was!

“‘It did not happen,’ I repeated; ‘it is a story they have invented.’

“‘That is not true!’ replied this innocent at once; ‘it is you who are inventing that now. And they killed her, that poor Béla! And with a blow from a poniard! Oh! the wicked people! And he, he did not love her, that Petchorine! He was wicked too!’

“She spoke! and of her own accord. The chance was too good, and I took advantage of it to deliver Mouza an abridged lecture on the literature of our

country; she listened to me with a contempt which clearly informed me how perfectly indifferent all those things were to her. When, my eloquence exhausted, I had finished speaking, she rose, brushed her hair back, and wished to go away with the book. I extended my hand.

“‘I am going to take it,’ said she, ‘you gave it to me.’

“‘To finish the story about Béla only, and it is finished. Return me the book, the rest is not interesting.’

“She hesitated and I thought for a moment that she was going to run off with my little volume, in which case I would have been obliged to have given up trying to catch her; but she submitted, for the first time in her life, and, very reluctantly put her treasure into my hand.

“‘I know a great many stories,’ said I to her, ‘I could relate them to you; but you detest me and you never wish to speak to me.’

“She threw me a glance in which confusion, reproach, curiosity and something else which was very evasive, and very sweet were strangely mingled, and she cast down her head. This was a victory. I retired majestically, bearing my trophy with me.

“In the evening after dinner, instead of retiring as she did every day after she had nibbled a little fruit, she rose slowly, took several turns round the room, gave mysteriously an order to the servant-maid who, an instant later, brought me all my smoker’s apparatus,—an attention that was as delicate as unusual,—

and ended by sitting down in her place again, opposite to me.

"I smoked in silence; she stifled a little sigh of impatience from time to time; at length, seeing that I was as mute as a granite sphinx, she said to me with the voice of an enchantress:

"‘Tell me a story!’

"And since that time, my friends, I tell her stories—all day long! She accompanies me in all my walks, prepares my cigarettes for me, questions me a great deal, answers me as little as possible, and evidently considers me in the new light of a portable encyclopedia, ‘easy to consult in travels,’ as the prospectus of an encyclopedia in two volumes says, in which one never finds what one looks for. This rôle of Larousse’s Dictionary is charming and perilous. Mouza is extraordinarily pretty, almost prettier than she is uncivilized; and she does not suspect it; she seems as though she had the sort of friendship for me that one has for an old horse to whom its rest has been given; and I evidently was not born for this rôle of tutor to young ladies, and I know no longer what to do. Yesterday, I spoke of taking a journey to Moscow, to go after all my violins that were begun and remain unfinished; she began by being sulky with me, and at night I saw that she had been crying.

"My friends, my dear friends, come and take me out of this, and since your ladies are sweet and compassionate, implore them to come with you, so as to try and take Mouza away to some boarding-school, no matter where. This life is no longer bearable, and I

am a great fool not to have understood from the beginning what would inevitably happen. Answer me by return mail with some advice, while awaiting your coming, which would be better than all the rest.

“Your much perplexed friend,

ANDRÉ LADOF.”

Démiane was alone when this letter reached Piati-gorsk; he read and re-read it two or three times attentively, and then began to walk up and down the drawing-room. Hélène had gone out with her mother to make some purchases, and Victor was busily occupying himself with preparations for their departure.

After a few seconds of reflection, he sat down at his desk, and wrote on a sheet of paper:

“If you wish to be happy and without reproach, marry her. Your friend, — DÉMIANE.”

After which he sealed the letter and continued his walk.

The Prince's death had delayed their plan for an immediate departure. Raben, who had gone to announce it to the young artist on the day that it occurred, had advised him to wait for a few days.

“You have been well received at the house,” said the diplomatist kindly; “the Prince showed you a great deal of friendship, it is proper that you should attend the funeral services which will take place here before the transportation of that poor friend's remains to the chapel where all the members of his family repose, on his estate in the neighborhood of Moscow.”

It was thus, that in memory of the Prince's friendship for him—it needed Raben to invent that friendship—Démiane had written his name in the book at the Princess', and had been present at the customary prayers in the drawing-room, which was hung in black and transformed into a *chapelle ardente*. He had seen there, during these prayers, which lasted for hours, Cléopâtre, more beautiful than ever in her long crape veil, bow and prostrate herself with all the dignity of a widow who has fulfilled her duty to the end.

That night of anguish had changed her; her complexion had grown dark, her eyes had become sunken, her sculptural beauty seemed refined by grief. Those who surrounded her were astonished at the havoc which a loss that was of such little importance in everybody's eyes, had caused; the Prince was not interesting enough to occasion so many regrets, and if Cléopâtre had not maintained so irreproachable a manner that no one could accuse her of making a parade of her despair, they would perhaps have considered her as an unskilful actress. But she did not speak of her loss; and her haughty coldness did not permit either allusions to or consolations about it, and what she felt inwardly remained a secret to herself alone.

She was "struck," as old women say; the death of her fetish coinciding with Démiane's rebellion had seemed to her a decree of fate. Without asking herself why she had deserved to be punished more this time than so many others, she had bowed her head, accepting this chance as a chastisement; and for her proud nature nothing was more terrible than to submit.

She saw Démiane, and bowed to him, as to the others, without speaking to him. She spoke to no one except Raben, who had taken charge very naturally of the material part of the troubles which follow such events. Démiane, as he bowed before this widow of the day before, felt nothing tremble within him of that which had formerly made him beside himself. She was punished by himself and by fate; he was satisfied, and even he had pardoned her. Now he was sure of never having loved her, for one does not cure oneself thus of a true love that has been wounded.

Once only, he was disturbed by a passing emotion. The day that was designated for the removal of the body a magnificent service took place in the church; he attended it, with all the town, and behind him, just when Raben was giving his orders to the pall-bearers, he heard these words:

“The Count gives himself a great deal of trouble.”

“Why not? It is natural enough, when one wants to move into a house, to help move out of it those who give up the place.”

“Then she will marry him?”

“Of course! They have said so for ten years at Moscow and even at the Court. They will make him an ambassador.”

Démiane had trembled at the thought of seeing Raben take the place which he had occupied himself such a short time before; and then the thought that it was not his place, but that of the Prince which the future ambassador would take, made him shrug his shoulders with a smile of pity.

A week had scarcely passed since these events, and

the Princess had left, accompanying her husband's body. If the authorities could have allowed her to carry it about with her during the remainder of her days, she would have done so with joy, so as not to be separated from what remained to her of her talisman. This woman, who was afraid of nothing, had an unhealthy dread of what would happen to her when the sepulchral slab would be sealed over her husband's body! Raben had remained, in order not to make evident a haste that would be in bad taste, but he was going to leave Piatigorsk, and would arrive at Moscow at the same time with the Princess, who was travelling by short stages. Our friends, whom nothing detained, had lost some time, thanks to Madame Mianof's want of energy, and they were only to leave that town the next day.

Démiane, while thinking of Ladof's letter, recalled many different emotions, and with them the life he had led with his friends. Would André do as he had nearly done himself! Would he pass near happiness without knowing it, preoccupied as he was with other dreams and other fancies? This young girl about whom he spoke was imperfect without doubt, wild and fantastic, but she was good and tender to the weak and to the young; she was intelligent; what could not one do with a child of sixteen who was endowed with so many good qualities together with her faults? Faults? What did those matter? Démiane also had his faults, he recognized them now; he found more in himself than he really had; and did he not hope, however, that Hélène would one day accept him from pity.

As a conclusion to these meditations, he took the letter and carried it to the post. On returning he heard Victor's voice, who was saying to the ladies:

"To-morrow, at eight o'clock in the morning."

"So soon?" said H  l  ne, with a little regret.

"Do you wish to remain longer?"

"No, oh, no! But we are going to leave Madame Moutine, and that gives me a great deal of sorrow."

D  miane did not hear his brother's answer, for it was whispered in H  l  ne's ear, for whom alone it was intended.

"And I also; it gives me a great deal of sorrow,—more than you believe, perhaps; but I have a consolation, which is that I take you with me."

She smiled and looked at Victor, doubtfully.

"So much sorrow as that?" said she. "I did not know that you were such a great friend of Madame Moutine's; she is kind to all, but—"

Victor hesitated for an instant, then a thought of sacrifice arose in his heart and he decided suddenly to put an impassable barrier between H  l  ne and himself. They were alone, for D  miane was talking with Madame Mianof at the foot of the stairway.

"At the risk of appearing ridiculous to you," said he, "I am going to confide to you the secret of my life; a poor hunchback can also love, provided he keeps his love to himself alone; Madame Moutine, long before her marriage, was the star of my life, and she will always remain the ideal of woman to me. I loved you at once, my sister H  l  ne, because you resemble her—and now forgive me for having had the folly of loving and the vanity of telling you so."

Hélène held out her hand to Victor with a mixture of compassion and tenderness. In spite of the charity of her nature, she could not help thinking that, in truth, to love was folly, when one had so little chance of making oneself loved; but she did not express her thought. Victor, who was happy at the subterfuge which would shelter from all suspicion the entire devotion which he might henceforth give his "sister Hélène," felt the bitterness at the same time that he felt the sweetness of the sacrifice; but he had done right and did not wish to repent of it.

CHAPTER LI.

THE LITTLE WILD GIRL.

LADOFF was awaiting his friends on the threshold of his latticed doorway. His domain was not ostentatious, but he possessed what is worth more than worldly luxury, fat cows and fine sheep. Buried up to his knees in the grass of the steppe, he was looking at the road impatiently; the shadows of his trees were already lengthening on the ground, and he feared to see the day pass by without bringing him his friends. Mouza, who had become, not more wild but timid, had approached several times to scan the road as he was doing, but she had hastily withdrawn every time that he had wished to retain her.

Mouza was much afraid of the ladies who were going to arrive, and still she had a great desire to know them. What could ladies be like who went into society and who played the piano? She almost regretted to have her solitude disturbed, which for some weeks she had willingly shared with André; however, her natural curiosity drew her to these unknown beings who were going to give her a little glimpse of the world.

In her odd little brain, a great work had been going on by degrees. The stories which André told her, and some books which he had made her read, had informed her of the existence of a society in which the habits of the steppe were not in usage. She understood the

strangeness of her behaviour; and she realized Ladof's rights over this house which until then, she had considered as her own, in spite of all the arguments used to convince her of the truth. With the conviction that she was not in her own home, and that consequently she was enjoying the young heir's hospitality, shame had entered her mind at having acted as she had done; all this was very vague, and in the state of a sensation and not of reasoning. But these new meditations had made her timid; and with timidity, modesty had entered her soul; the story of Béla had revealed to her what is called love, and she had perceived that Ladof held henceforth the first place in her life, since her old father slept under the graveyard trees a few *verstes* away. Thus ripened suddenly, Mouza had formed a great resolve, which she could not execute alone, and for which she hoped some aid from those who were coming.

A ray of red sunlight shone on a little cloud of dust on the road.

"There they are!" exclaimed Ladof turning towards his little friend.

The latter had disappeared. The cloud of dust approached quickly, for Russian postillions make it a point of honor to arrive at galoping speed. The two *tarantass* that were carrying the artists and their renown stopped before the brick house, and André found himself clasped in his friend's arms before he had time to offer the ladies his hand.

When Hélène and her mother reached the ground, which was the easiest of operations for the young girl,

but which was not without danger for Madame Mianof, they all looked at each other a little astounded; then, after the necessary presentations, they went towards the dining-room.

To André's inexpressible surprise, Mouza was standing near the samovar, before a table covered with white linen and furnished with a very appetizing collation. The good fellow had given some orders to the maid, but he was far from expecting that his little savage would do so much herself; he thanked her for it by the most gracious smile, which she accepted as her due with a great deal of dignity, and a blush which made her charming. After a quarter of an hour, she answered Hélène, in monosyllables, it is true, but with a timid grace which at once won for her the young artist's heart.

The next morning, very early, Démiane and Victor went to find André, who was walking in one of the pathways of his kitchen-garden with his hands behind his back.

"Well?" said Démiane, "has my letter brought forth fruit?"

"What does the grave Victor say about this absurd plan?"

"I say that my brother is right; "I would never perhaps, have thought of this ending, but I approve it; It was Démiane's part to find it; he had a particular grace for it!"

"Eh!" said Ladof passing his arm familiarly in that of the young violinist; "grace! What grace, and in what particular?"

"Nothing," murmured Démiane who was much embarrassed, "it is nothing at all, Victor is joking. Then, you are going to get married? When?"

"When Mouza wishes."

"Have you spoken to her about it?"

It was André's turn to appear confused. He hesitated, wished to speak two or three times, but could not find any words, and ended by laughing.

"What an idiot I am," said he plucking up his courage; "no, I have not spoken to her about it."

"Why?"

"Don't I tell you that I am an idiot? I am afraid she will refuse."

Our friends looked at each other anxiously. That was true, suppose she should refuse?

"Would you like Hélène to speak to her about it?" Victor suddenly suggested, his face radiant with delight at the thought of such an excellent plan.

"Indeed I would!" exclaimed Ladof; "that is a capital idea! Your Hélène is charming! And you, Démiane, why do you not marry her? She is just the woman that you need! She seems to be as sensible as you are far from being — eh?"

This time it was Démiane who put on a foolish look.

"Are you also afraid that she will refuse you?" continued André, without meaning any harm.

Démiane had no desire to laugh nor had Victor, and yet they all three burst out laughing together at the same time at the sight of each other's expression.

"She has refused you!" said André, with the tone of a doctor; "it is written on your red ears, my friend Démiane! Don't bear me any spite and try not to

home? That is to say, not in my home, since this house belongs to *him*, but—”

She stopped. It was very difficult for a mind so little given to the solution of such problems to express itself.

Hélène seized the occasion which presented itself.

“*He* does not wish that you should go away, Mouza,” said she, caressing the brown hand of the little undisciplined girl; “he wishes, on the contrary, that you should always remain here—he would like that this house in which you were born should become your own,—so as to live and die here with him.”

Mouza looked at this tranquil person, who in her sweet voice said such astonishing things to her, and saw that she was speaking seriously.

“How?” said she, hesitating.

“There is only one way, Mouza, which would be to take the house with its owner. Have you any—any friendship for Monsieur Ladof?”

The young girl blushed suddenly.

“He is good,” said she, with vivacity; “he is very good and very obedient; he has always done what I told him to do.”

If André had heard her he would have been but slightly flattered at the compliment.

“Then you do love him?”

Mouza did not reply.

“Would you like to pass your whole life with him, or else leave him to go elsewhere, as you said a moment ago?”

“He is good!” repeated the ingenuous girl, without daring to raise her eyes.

"You will consent to marry him, will you not?"

"To marry him?" said Mouza, rising, "does he wish to marry me?"

"Certainly! What were you thinking of then?"

The poor little girl's face became covered with blushes. She was the daughter of a peasant of the steppe, and no one ever really knew whether her father was married or not: Mouza had heard this spoken of, for the children of the neighboring village had not spared calling her names in their youthful quarrels, and the idea of marriage was to her a sort of imagined but unattainable Eden.

"Will you marry him?" continued H  l  ne with her perfect grace; "and be to him a good, submissive and devoted wife until your death, and aid him to bear unhappy days and rejoice with him on the happy ones? That is what marriage is, it is devotion on both sides, and he will protect and will love you."

"He has already protected me," stammered the little girl — "Where is he?"

"In the kitchen-garden, he is waiting your answer."

Without speaking a word, Mouza rose, and contrary to her habit, she walked sedately as far as the kitchen-garden gate. She opened the little door and entered the pathway courageously where Ladof was walking quite alone, ruminating on what he called his stupidity. At the sound of Mouza's light footsteps, he turned round; and she went up close to him and bowed down before him, as peasants do.

"What is it?" he asked in a sullen tone, thinking that she had not seen H  l  ne, or that some freak of her capricious mind urged her to a childish joke.

"I am your wife and your servant," said Mouza humbly, who felt her eyes fill with tears.

He seized her in his arms and raised her from the ground with a cry of joy.

"Do you love me then?" said he as he placed her on the ground again, but without releasing her from his embrace.

"I do not know, but I do know that I cannot live apart from thee; I wanted to go away, and it was so hard! I think I never could have done so, I would have come back."

He looked at her entranced, with a gleam of merriment in his eyes.

"It makes no difference if I say thee to thee, does it?" continued Mouza: "before thou didst come I had never said you to any one, except to the lawyer, and I do not know whether I ever spoke a word to him since my birth. It annoyed me very much to say you to thee!"

"Do not annoy thyself any longer," exclaimed Ladof laughing with all his heart; "Paradise is opened, we are going to be as happy as the little birds which thou didst forbid my shooting."

The joy of these two beings soon filled all the house. It was arranged that the wedding should take place the following week, and that our friends should be present, and then depart the same day, leaving the couple to their honey-moon.

CHAPTER LII.

THE VICTORY OF HÉLÈNE.

THE atmosphere of this house, where Ladof was singing all day long, and where Démiane, for want of a piano to accompany him, improvised for whole hours together, confiding to his violin the task of expressing all that his disquieted soul felt, was as exciting as a strong perfume. Madame Mianof had made herself a little Thebaïd in her room. She had drilled the servant-maid to bring her tea four or five times a day, and she passed her time there as pleasantly as anywhere else, between games of *patience* and cigarettes.

Victor devoted himself to preparations for the wedding, as though he had never done anything else all his life. With a hammer in his hand, and nails in his pockets, he could be seen perched on a ladder, arranging and disarranging, putting up curtains here, demolishing partitions there, and playing his part of upholsterer in a perfectly serious fashion. Ladof had profited by his good will and his intelligence to execute a thousand little alterations in the house, which would make it more comfortable, and which till then he had not had the courage to undertake.

Démiane seemed desirous of regaining the time he had lost at Piatigorsk, and practised on his violin with

a persistence that was worthy of all praise. He spoke but little and seemed sad, and his friends clearly saw that he was overwhelmed with regret. But did this regret have relation to Cléopâtre's love, which had been so suddenly lost, or to the precious time which he had spent on that dream? Did he regret Cléopâtre? or did he reproach himself for having loved her?

Hélène alone could have solved this question. Démiane's new humility, and affectionate sadness, she felt was remorse, and not regret; but she took good care not to say anything about it, not wishing to lose by too prompt a pardon the benefit of this return to better feelings. Moreover, she was disquieted herself; not that she had any fear about her future; she knew she possessed a talent that was capable of supplying henceforth all her wants and those of her mother; but the happiness of others is a sorrowful sight to those who suffer, and she was suffering. All the jealousy which she had forbidden herself to feel for the Princess when the latter was reigning over Démiane, returned to her now with singular bitterness; and then she feared her friend's instability: she asked herself if he would love her long, if he would be a good husband: if aristocratic beauties would not regain a sovereign control over this ambitious plebeian; and such questions did not bring her a consoling answer.

The day before the wedding, Mouza went to find her in the drawing-room where, all alone, seated by the window, she was questioning the future with a heart heavy with fear. It was raining, and the autumn wind made the yellow leaves that had been torn from the

poplars, whirl round in the evening air. It had already grown dark. The day and the hour were sad, but Mouza knew no more sadness. She sat down beside her new and only friend, and without speaking to her she took her hand and caressed it in her own for some time.

"I wanted," said she timidly at length, "to beg you to thank your great friend for what he has done for me."

"Who is my great friend?" asked Hélène surprised.

"The one who plays the violin — Démiane — he loves you more than all the others; he loves you as much as I love André."

"Who told you so?" said the young artist, blushing.

"I have seen it; I am wise now! I have learned many things since last spring. Will you thank him for me? I am ashamed and do not dare to."

"I will thank him, willingly," said Hélène, "but for what?"

"For having told André that he ought to marry me."

"Was it he who advised Monsieur Ladof to do it?"

"Why yes! did you not know it?"

No, Hélène had never heard anything about it; it mattered little to the others whether the idea had come from Ladof himself or from another; but to her alone this fact had some importance.

"I will thank him," said she, pensively; "he has done well, it was from a good heart."

"Was it not? I am only a little uncultivated child, not much better than a peasant; and André is a lord; but when people love each other, that makes no longer any difference. Do you not think so Hélène?"

“Certainly,” replied the latter, passing her hand over Mouza’s hair.

“And you,” continued the young betrothed girl, “why do you not marry your friend. He would be very happy, any one can see that. Do you not love him?”

“Oh! yes,” said H  l  ne, who was agitated.

“Well, why do you not wish to see him happy? Look at Andr  , how gay he is since we have come to an agreement! Does it give you pleasure then to see him sad?”

“No, oh! no!” said H  l  ne, bitterly.

“Is he not rich enough?”

“It is not that, either.”

“Then, he is not good enough —”

“He is good,” interrupted H  l  ne, “but to marry one must be something else besides good.”

“Why? Just see how bad I am! I know nothing, I am good for nothing, I have tormented Andr   dreadfully, and still he is going to marry me. It is because he loves me; but you, you do not love your friend enough.”

H  l  ne hung down her head. What a singular Mentor was this odd and ignorant child. However, she was right, Andr   was going to marry her in spite of her faults; why, then, did she wish that D  miane should be faultless to give him her life? Would she not have a thousand times more influence over him in the privacy of domestic life? Had she not taught him to respect her henceforth, to consult her in everything? Was it not he who had need of her, when she could live away

from him? Away from him! Without doubt she could do it, but at the cost of what bitter pain!

A noise of footsteps was heard in the next room.

"There he is," said Mouza, "I am going to run away; tell him what you promised me?"

She slipped out of the room, passed Démiane on the threshold, gave him a smile and disappeared.

Démiane did not expect to find Hélène alone; he was bewildered for a moment, and then he sat down on the chair which Mouza had just left. Since the morning interview at Piatigorsk, they had not been alone together before. He thought of it, and she also, for she turned her face away and looked at the window, where the water was streaming down the panes.

"We leave to-morrow," said the young man, in a constrained voice; "we will not see each other again quite alone, Hélène, let us speak frankly to each other,

She made a little sign with her head, indicating that she consented to it.

"You are coming to Moscow with us; and then what do you intend to do?"

"I do not know!" said she, despondingly.

The thought of the separation took all her energy from her.

"Would you like to remain at Moscow and try to make yourself a name there? I will aid you with all my power. But, dear Hélène, have you thought of the danger there would be in two young persons such as you and myself helping each other mutually? Have you considered what the world would say at seeing us always together?"

She looked at him, amazed that of himself he should

have thought of all that. He had been occupying himself a great deal about her, then! The egotism of which she had often reproached him must have given place to more generous preoccupations.

"I will do whatever you command, *Hélène*," continued *Démiane*. "If you would like me to speak about you to Monsieur Roussof, he can begin again for you among his friends, what he has already done for me, and I will go somewhere else, wherever you will tell me to go, so as not to do you any harm; only you will permit me to write to you, will you not?"

Hélène did not reply immediately.

"*Mouza* asked me to thank you," she said after a silence; "she says that you have given proof of great kindness in advising *Ladof* to marry her. I think as she does, *Démiane*, and I say also that you are good."

"Good! oh, no!" said the young man sadly. "For three weeks, I have been weighing what I am worth, and I am not worth much! I have weighed also my conduct towards you, *Hélène*, and I have found myself very culpable. When I disposed of you in such an insolent manner at the villa, you know? I was mad! simply mad! And you have been very generous not to throw my madness in my face! It is since then that I have understood my stupidity and my pride. You did well to refuse me, *Hélène*, I am not worthy of you. Shall I be some day? I want to be! Oh, yes, I want to be! But can I?"

He sighed deeply, and his sigh came from the most sacred part of his being, that part which weeps over our faults when we have returned to reason.

"One can do all one wills!" said H  l  ne. "But one must have the will."

"I will it with all my heart!" replied D  miane, with force. "But alone and without any advice — you will write to me?"

"We will remain together," said the young girl, softly. The increasing darkness gave her courage.

"And the danger of which I spoke just now, and the rumor of our engagement, and the wrong that I have so foolishly done you, and which nothing can repair? Ah! if you loved me, if you would only love me!"

"I told you that I do love you," murmured H  l  ne.

"Then, you — it is not possible! Say it to me that I may hear it: you do consent?"

"I consent," said the young girl with a voice that had grown firmer. "But, listen to me, D  miane. I can forgive you everything so long as you do not lie. I could forgive you even for failing in your sworn faith to me, which, God forbid, should ever be! But you are weak. Only, what I would never forgive would be a word of contempt to me or a disdainful action! I may be wrong, I may do wrong, but I have a soul that is as noble as your own, and in becoming your wife I remain your equal. Let us each be indulgent to the other, dear. We are so weak in the face of evil!"

He knelt down before her, and it was on his bowed head that she herself put the kiss of betrothal.

The next day, at the same hour, our friends took leave of the new couple who had been united in marriage that morning. They left the happy little house

that was going to shelter so much joy, with a feeling of regret that was sweetened by hope. André promised to go and pass the winter in Moscow. It was at some hundreds of verstes from there that Madame Mianof first heard of her daughter's future destiny. This prospect filled her with perfect happiness, and for a long time all her games of *patience* were devoted to solving a wise problem: must Hélène's wedding dress be of white silk or tarltane?

"Not white silk," said Démiane, with a slight shiver, who was finally consulted about it; "I have a horror of white silk; anything you please, except that."

Six months after their marriage the couple went to make a visit to Démiane's father, and passed through M ——. The archimandrite had grown old very fast, but it seemed as though he would fade away rather than die. He became very fond of little Hélène, and confided to her when she was leaving him, a secret which he had kept all his life: it was a roll of sacred chants of which he had composed the music.

"When I am dead," said he to his little friend, "you will play them. You will have them sung if you can; but only when I shall have returned to earth; I do not wish to give myself vain thoughts of pride; perhaps after my death the good Lord will forgive me them easier."

His wish was too soon answered, for the following winter he died quietly, without a pain or struggle; his chants, which were given to the public under a borrowed name, have now obtained a wonderful success. The good man was a great musician.

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